Table of Contents

1. Author's Introduction
2. Prologue
3. Allegiances
4. Chapter 1
5. Chapter 2
6. Chapter 3
7. Chapter 4
8. Chapter 5
9. Chapter 6
10. Chapter 7
11. Chapter 8
12. Chapter 9
13. Chapter 10
14. Chapter 11
15. Chapter 12
16. Chapter 13
17. Chapter 14
18. Chapter 15
19. Chapter 16
20. Chapter 17
21. Chapter 18
22. Author's Final Thoughts
23. Updated Clan Allegiances
24. Changes I made

Author's Introduction

Decided it was too confusing to have the rewritten version in the old story. So here the new one. A lot of changes has occur in this one as I plot it out much better than the old one. There a lot more cats and the story will go slower this time. Nightpaw will remain the same so no worries if you enjoy his character. This version is after I read Exile from Shadowclan so Volewhisper will be in here. Now Canon Characters aren't going to be the exact same as I'm not good at writing their exact personality but I will try my best not to veer too off track from their canon characterization. If I do, please let me know as sometimes I will mess up. Nobody is perfect.

This story takes place a moon after both redtail and oakheart died and firepaw has been in Thunderclan for a bit. As you recall, he wasn't on the gathering patrol while Sandpaw and Dustpaw was. Brokenstar didn't murder his father in this AU as he grew up with the love and care of Yellowfang instead of Lizardstripe. Since Yellowfang was rejected to be a medicine cat, she stayed a warrior. Since Brokenstar isn't evil, the kits he murdered is alive and well, as well as Yellowfang's other two kits since she was in the nursery and Sagewhisker saved them. Enjoy and please comment if you have any questions or to point out any mistakes. Also I change Mistyfoot,Mosskit and Stonefur names. Makes no sense for Greypool and Oakheart not to change their names since Bluestar did reveal the names to ThunderClan. Also the allegiance might change due to me having to read all the books to see which shadowclan cats is still alive and might change the other clans' members cuz of new and future books. Apparently Wolfstep was still alive yet no mention of him until moonrise. Ugh. why did we have to stick to ThunderClan for so long. Makes writing other clans harder.Right now I'm reading Leopardstar's honor to get a clear list of who was alive during the prophecy begins arc. And now Onestar Confession is coming out as well which took place during around that time so might update WindClan allegiance too. And changing snowkit and mistlekit to be

born in the first book so they still be young kits later. So think of them just being born.

Also I have a job so updating will be very slow as I can't work on it during my work days. Just letting you readers know. This story isn't going to be dropped either as I want a good ShadowClan AU out there. Even if I have to write it myself.

Prologue

[image]

Despite the chilly air of leaf-bare, Yellowfang feels so warm as she look down at her kits who was just born. Her ears twitch as she hears Raggedpelt outside, padding nervously as Sagewhisker check her kits. It was touch and go for both mollies as they was weaker than the tom. She thought one was born stillborn but it was because she couldn't breathe. After Sagewhisker saved them, she shook her head, about to say that she threw her gift away when Raggedpelt's head shove through the entrance of the nursery.

"How are they?" His whiskers twitch nervously as he saw them.

"Yes they are fine. The mollies need to be watch but they are fine for now. Don't stay too long as Lizardstripe needs her sleep." Sagewhisker nodded at them both as she left.

Raggedpelt slowly padded to her, touching her nose as he sat near her, looking down at their kits.

"Did you give them names?" He whisper as his eyes glow with love for her and the kits.

Yellowfang gave a tired purr as her tail point to the cream and grey molly. "Hopekit. The pale ginger molly is named Wishkit. And the tom is Brokenkit."

The kits was busy feeding as she named them.

"Too bad you was rejected by starclan to be a medicine cat. Then you wouldn't have to deal with this pain." Lizardstripe mutters as she look down at her own kits. The brown molly was up to make sure her kits stay out of Yellowfang and Sagewhisker way.

"I wouldn't trade this for the world." Yellowfang snarl as she look up at her mate. Raggedpelt left to tell the clan the news as Yellowfang fell asleep.

It been six moons and she watch with pride as her kits became apprentices. She also noticed that Runningkit became a medicine cat apprentice and she felt satisfied that she didn't have to give up being a warrior due to her hyper empathy power. She smooth out her fur as she remembered her trip to the moonstone when Sagewhisker asks her to be her apprentice due to it. She nearly done it too if it wasn't for Silverflame, her grandmother who now walks with Starclan saying she knew in her heart that she was a warrior, rejecting her to become a medicine cat apprentice. After the rejection, Sagewhisker was disappointed but understood. When they returned, she reveal her power to the clan. Cedarstar and the clan offer to help her learn how to block it. It took many moons but now she hardly feels it when someone gets hurt. She watch Brokenpaw closely as he was a bit of a troublemaker but knew Nightpelt can handle him.

She look over at Sagewhisker, smiling as she saw her teaching Runningpaw the herbs. Yes this feels right. She can teach her kits to stay on the right path as she went out to hunt with Raggedpelt by her side. After a successful hunt, she return to see her kits talking to the other apprentices. They was joking around, talking about the territory they saw. She drop her prey on the prey pile as she watch brokenpaw get along with the others. He is more impulsive and arrogant than his siblings but hope that Nightpelt can mold him to be more patient and humble.

"Yellowfang. I can see that you still worry over brokenpaw. There a reason why I gave him Nightpelt as a mentor. He needs lessons in patience and selflessness. " Cedarstar sat beside her, also watching the apprentices.

"There more to warriors than fighting and I hope he will learn that." She said with a twitch of her whiskers as she took a squirrel to eat. Raggedpelt call her over to eat with him and Cloudpelt.

Cedarstar said nothing as he went to his den. Only time will tell on what kind of cat Brokenpaw will be.

Seasons passed and Yellowfang watch her kits grow up into impressive warriors. She yell out their names loudly. Hopepaw became Hopeheart, Wishpaw became Wishflame and Brokenpaw

became Brokentail. She realizes she had nothing to worry about as Brokenpaw refused to be named warrior so early saying he wants to earn it on his own and not because his father is now leader. He also check in on his old mentor, who retired to the elder's den after training him. She was on a border patrol and only learnt why his attitude changed after the danger has passed. Nightpelt saved Brokenpaw life from Marmalade, a rogue who lived in twolegplace. Brokenpaw teased him, causing the mess and Nightpelt saved him along with Blackfoot and Flintfang. That one fight showed him the true meaning of being a warrior and when he asks nightpelt why he risked his life, he told him it's what clanmates do. He realize how dumb he been after seeing Nightpelt's pelt covered in cobwebs and struggling to breathe. That when she heard him say that he didn't want any help to become a warrior. He wants to do it on his own and not because of his relations. She never been prouder. He even agreed with Nightpelt against being a warrior too soon.

Yellowfang look up at her beautiful son, as it been moons since he became leader. He was a great deputy and knew he will be a great leader. "We did good Raggedstar." She mumble as she glance up at silverpelt after watching the clan call out his name.

Many moons later

It was raining heavily as a ginger brown and black tom hid under a monster to keep dry. His ear twitch as his companions join him. Without a word, they ran to the monster den where others had gathered. He grin as he saw the word about this meeting and that they had no idea. Shaking off the rain, he ran to jump on top of a sleeping monster so others can see him.

"What is this about Snipe?" A dark brown tom growl as he move away from the new arrivals. The others stop talking as he look over the crowd to make sure the ones that was close to *him* weren't here.

"I know you are wondering about why I called this meeting. Also I understand you are wary about being here due to *him* not knowing but we are all tired! Tired of being afraid! Tired of getting nothing but scraps while he and the ones close to him get fed! Why are we still in Twolegplace?! There a whole forest out there with so much prey and shelter. Only because he is too scared to attack the clans.

They are just groups of cats like us." He look down at a white queen who was close to kitting.

"Aren't you afraid that once those kits no longer need you that you be forced to leave? Or worst?" He saw fear flash in her eyes and knew he was right.

"You bring up good points. Why should we suffer just because *he* is leader? I can lead as well as he does. But what do you suggest about the clans? There is a lot of them and we are so few." A yellow brown tabby tom with a lazy eye asks.

"If you don't want to get involved, leave now! Tell no one what happened here. We will keep being with him until plans are made." Snipe watch as a few cats left. The white queen stay along with many others. Jumping down, he talk to them. Saying they need to just watch the clans, learn about them and then chase out the weakest. All they know is the clan names. There is ShadowClan, ThunderClan, WindClan and RiverClan. As he listen to the others, he had a smug grin.

Soon Scourge, your days of ruling are over.

Allegiances

[image]

ShadowClan

Leader: Brokenstar- long haired dark brown tabby tom with a bent tail and orange eyes

Deputy: Blackfoot- Large white tom with huge jet black paws and amber eyes. Has black rimmed ears(Tallpoppy mate)

Medicine cat: Runningnose-small grey and white tom with patchy, grizzled and ungroomed fur. and amber eyes

Warriors(Toms and Mollies without kits)

Yellowfang-Old dark grey molly with a broad flattened face and orange eyes. Has long matted fur

Rowanberry-Cream and brown molly with amber eyes(Clawface's mate)

Scorchwind-Ginger tabby tom with green eyes(darkflower mate)

Wolfstep-long furred, fluffy dark gray tabby tom with a white front paw and tail tip and green eyes(Fernshade mate)

Tangleburr-Grey and brown molly

Russetfur-Sleek dark ginger tabby molly with dark green eyes

Boulder- Big skinny pale grey tom with a ragged left ear, nicked right ear and blue eyes

Apprentice, Wetpaw

Clawface- heavily built, scrawny battle scarred brown tom with a right nicked ear, white leaf shape spot on chest and yellow eyes(Rowanberry mate)

Apprentice, Littlepaw

Flintfang-Grey tom with thick fur on paws and amber eyes

Darkflower-Black molly with blue eyes(Scorchwind mate)

Whitethroat-Small black tom with white chest and paws. has yellow eyes(Father to Wishflame's kits)

Hopeheart-Cream and grey molly

Fernshade-Slender tortoiseshell molly with yellow eyes

Deerfoot-Long legged brown tom

Swampcloud-White tom with dark green eyes

Newtspeck-Black and ginger tabby molly with yellow eyes

Tallpoppy-Long legged light brown tabby molly with green eyes(Blackfoot mate)

Applefur-Mottled brown molly with pale green eyes

Badgerfang- Fluffy black and white tom with face stripes like a badger

Mintshade-Small grey tom with yellow eyes

Marigoldfur-Small tortoiseshell molly with orange eyes

Ratscar-Dark brown tom with long scar across his back with green eyes and a patchy tail.(Father to dawncloud kits)

Cinderfur-Scarred thin grey tom with orange eyes

Stumpytail-Brown tom with darker stripes and a short stumpy tail

Apprentice, Brownpaw

Blossomsky-White molly with blue eyes

Volewhisper-Tiny light brown tom with yellow eyes and a scarred

left hind leg

Mossclaw-Big brown and white tom with very pale blue eyes

Apprentices(More than six moons old, training to be warriors)

Littlepaw- Very small thin brown tabby tom with dark stripes, light brown tail with bright blue eyes

Brownpaw-Big brown tom with orange eyes

Wetpaw-Grey tabby tom and amber eyes

Nightpaw-thin small black tom with white heart shape spot on forehead, white muzzle, white paws, white spots on back and white tail tip with yellow eyes

Queens(mollies expecting or nursing kits)

Dawncloud-Small pale ginger tabby molly with blue eyes. (Mother to mousekit, a small dark brown molly with blue eyes, and gingerkit, a orange and brown tabby molly with green eyes)

Wishflame-Pale ginger tabby with yellow eyes(mother to Turtlekit, a black and orange tortoiseshell molly with blue eyes and gullkit, a black and white molly with white paws. has orange eyes)

Brightflower-Orange tabby molly with flattened face(oldest nursing queen)

Elders(Former warriors and queens now retired)

Crowtail-Sleek long legged small black tabby molly with green eyes

Ashfur-Thin long bodied grey tom with green eyes

Archeye-Grey tabby tom with black stripes, patchy fur and thick stripe over left eye. has green eyes

Nightpelt-Small lean and battered black tom with a long tail, short glossy pelt with nicked ears and green yellow eyes

Hollyflower-Sleek long legged dark grey and white molly with

green eyes

ThunderClan

Leader: Bluestar-Pale blue grey molly tinged with silver around the muzzle, a long scar on shoulder that parts the fur across them.

Deputy: Redtail-Dark tortoiseshell tom with distinctive ginger tail and amber eyes

Apprentice, Dustpaw

Medicine Cat: Spottedleaf-Dark tortoiseshell and white molly with distinctive dappled coat and amber eyes

Warriors

Lionheart- Pale golden tabby tom with thick fur like a lion's mane and green eyes(Father to Frostfur's kits)

Apprentice, Greypaw

Tigerclaw-Big dark brown tabby tom with unusually long front claws. Right ear is split in a V shape near the top, has a scar across his muzzle and pale amber eyes

Apprentice,Ravenpaw

Whitestorm- Big white tom with tufted ears and yellow eyes(Father to Brindleface's kits)

Apprentice, Sandpaw

Darkstripe-Sleek black and grey tabby tom with yellow eyes

Longtail-Pale brown tabby tom with dark black stripes and pale blue eyes(Mousefur mate)

Runningwind-Swift light brown tabby tom with green eyes and a narrow face.

Willowpelt-Very pale silver grey molly with unusual blue eyes

Cricketsky-Blue grey molly with amber eyes

Mousefur-Small dusky brown molly with amber eyes(Longtail mate)

Apprentices

Dustpaw-Dark brown tom with amber eyes

Sandpaw-Pale ginger molly with barely visible stripes of darker fur and forest green eyes

Ravenpaw-Small skinny black tom with a tiny white dash on chest and white tip tail. Has green eyes

Greypaw-Long haired dark grey tom with dark stripe on back. has yellow eyes

Firepaw-Bright flame colored tom with emerald green eyes

Queens

Frostfur-White molly with dark sky blue eyes and sleek soft fur(Mother to Cinderkit, Smoky dark grey molly with pale blue eyes, Brightkit, White molly with ginger patches and blue eyes, Thornkit, Golden brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes and Brackenkit, long legged golden brown tabby tom with amber eyes)

Brindleface-Pale grey tabby molly with darker flecks and green eyes(close to kitting)

Goldenflower-Sleek, small,pale ginger tabby molly with small nick in one ear and yellow eyes.(Mother to Swiftkit, small black and white tom with pale amber eyes, Lynxkit, Ginger with black patches tom with yellow eyes)

Speckletail-Pale golden tabby molly with amber eyes. Oldest nursery queen (Mother to snowkit, Deaf white tom with pale blue eyes and mistlekit, Dark tabby molly)

Elders

One-Eye-Pale grey molly with one yellow eye. Oldest cat in

ThunderClan. Virtually blind and deaf.

Halftail-Dark brown tabby tom with patchy fur and part of his tail missing. Has yellow eyes

Dappletail-Dappled tortoiseshell and white molly with white patches and amber eyes

Rosetail-Grey tabby molly with bushy pinkish-orange tail

Smallear-Grey tom with very small ears. Has a nick in one ear and amber eyes(Father to Speckletail's kits)

Patchpelt-Small black and white tom with smooth fur and amber eyes(Father to Goldenflower kits.)

WindClan

Leader:Tallstar-Black and white tom with a very long tail and amber eyes

Deputy:Deadfoot-Small lean black tom with an unusable twisted left forepaw(Father to Ashfoot's kit)

Medicine Cat:Barkface-Dark brown tom with a short tail, a greying muzzle and yellow eyes

Warriors:Moor Runners

Mudclaw-Wiry mottled dark brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Apprentice,Webpaw

Tornear-Wiry grey tabby tom with blue eyes

Apprentice,Runningpaw

Onewhisker-Small and lean, mottled pale brown tabby tom with amber eyes and one white whisker

Apprentice,Whitepaw

Stagleap-Dark brown tom with amber eyes(Wrenflight mate)

Sorrelshine-Grey and brown molly

Larksplash-Tortoiseshell and white molly

Aspenfall-Lithe grey and white tom with long legs, wirey tail and sleek fur

Wrenflight-Brown molly(Stagleap mate)

Cloudrunner-Lithe, pale grey tom with sleek fur, long legs and a wirey tail(Father to Morningflower kits)

Brushspark-Sturdy ginger tom

Tunnelers

Pigeonflight-Dark grey tom with white patches

Darkfoot-Blue grey tom with darker paws, paler chest and belly, a white muzzle and yellow eyes

Apprentice, Robinpaw

Rushtail-Light creamy brown tom

Mistmouse-Light brown tabby molly

Crowfur-Black tom

Oatwhisker-Creamy brown tabby tom

Flytail- Snowy white tom

Rabbitear-Pale brown molly with fluffy white belly and yellow eyes

Bristlebark-Black tom

Apprentices

Webpaw-Wiry dark grey tabby tom with orange eyes

Runningpaw-Light grey tabby molly

Whitepaw-Small white molly

Robinpaw-Light brown molly with blue eyes

Queens

Ashfoot-Broad faced grey molly with blue eyes(mother to Eaglekit, A grey tom)

Morningflower-Tortoiseshell molly with amber eyes(Close to kitting)

Flowerstorm-Sleek furred brown and white tabby molly

Elders

Meadowslip-Pale grey molly

Hareflight-Light brown tom

Redclaw-Small dark ginger tom

Ryestalk-Grey tabby molly with soft fur and amber eyes

Hickorynose-Brown tom

Plumclaw-Small dark grey molly

Riverclan

Leader:Crookedstar-Huge light brown tabby tom with green eyes and a twisted jaw

Deputy:Oakheart-Thick and sleek furred dark reddish brown tom with amber eyes.

Medicine Cat: Mudfur-Lean and lithe, thick furred long hair light brown tom with a pale belly. Has golden eyes

Warriors

Dawnbright-Ginger and white molly

Mallowtail-Tortoiseshell tabby and white molly

Rippleclaw-Sleek, grizzled black and silver tabby tom

Timberfur-Big, burly, greying dark brown tom with sleek fur(Ottersplash mate)

Owlfur- Sleek furred, brown and white tom with a white splash muzzle and small head(Softwing mate)

Softwing-Small lithe snowy white molly with tabby patches

Cedarpelt- Greying, stout, large mottled brown tabby tom with a short tail(Lakeshine mate)

Piketooth-Skinny, greying, dark brown tabby tom with a narrow face and protruding canine teeth(Shimmerpelt mate)

Beetlenose-Broad shouldered tom with crow black fur

Voleclaw-Grey tom

Petaldust-Tortoiseshell molly

Echomist-Glossy, long haired pale grey molly. Fur is tipped with white, giving her a soft cloudy appearance

Mudthorn-Brown tom with black ears

Grasswhisker-Brown tabby molly

Frogleap- Muscular grey tom with a striped tail, broad head and amber eyes

Skyheart- Pale brown tabby molly with green eyes and torn ears(Reedtail mate)

Reedtail-Pale grey tabby tom that has a long stiff tail. Tail is darker, thin, and straight like a reed

Sedgecreek-Brown tabby molly with a long tail

Ottersplash-Sleek, pale ginger molly with white patches and a torn

ear(Timberfur mate)

Lakeshine-Mottled long haired, grey and white molly(Cedarpelt mate)

Shimmerpelt-Night black molly with a glossy pelt

Vixenleap-Black molly

Mosspelt-Lithe tortoiseshell and white molly with blue eyes and soft white chest fur(Frogleap mate)

Emberdawn-Dark ginger molly(Willowstep mate)

Lightstep-Small grey tom

Leopardfur-Sleek fur dappled golden tabby molly with amber eyes. Has unusual dark golden spots on her pelt with a long winding tail

Blackclaw-Lean muscular smoky black tom. Has a torn ear tip and orange eyes(Rainfall mate)

Apprentice,Heavypaw

Shellstream-Long legged thick furred pale grey blue tom with battle scarred ears, one is shredded. Has blue eyes(Father to Greenflower kits)

Apprentice,Shadepaw

Loudbelly-Dark brown tom with blue eyes

Apprentice, Silverpaw

Silverstream-Sleek slender silver and black tabby molly with bright blue eyes

Whiteclaw-Muscular dark brown tom with snowy white paws and amber eyes

Rainfall-lithe pale blue grey molly with thick sleek fur and a plumy tail. Has ice blue eyes(Blackclaw mate)

Willowstep-Pale grey and white molly with sleek fur. Has bright blue eyes(Emberdawn mate)

Apprentices

Heavypaw-Big and thickset brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

Shadepaw-Very dark grey molly

Silverpaw-Small silver tom

Queens

Greenflower-Plump, brown striped molly with white splash under chin, one white hind paw and green eyes(Close to kitting)

Elders

Tanglewhisker-Long haired, tabby tom with a thick knotted pelt, wide greying back, grizzled paws and left ragged ear

Birdsong-Tabby and white molly with a white belly, ginger patches around her grey flecked muzzle and amber eyes

Fallowtail-Light brown molly with soft fur and blue eyes

Graypool-Thin grey molly with patchy fur and a scarred muzzle

Cats outside the Clans

Barley-Black and white tom with blue eyes

Barry- A Black and white tom with green eyes

Charlie- A pure black tom with yellow eyes. Wears a blue collar and is Nightpaw's brother

BloodClan(Not a real clan, they are vicious rogues in twolegplace.)

Leader:Scourge-Smaller than average black tom with one white paw. Has ice blue eyes, a torn left ear and glossy fur. Wears a purple collar studded with teeth and claws from dogs and cats. His claws is reinforced with dogs' teeth.

Deputy:Bone-Massive black and white tom with green eyes. Has a battle scarred pelt with a scar between his eyes. Wears a blue collar studded with teeth from dogs and claws from cats.

Brick-Ginger tom with a patch of fur missing on his upper back.

Gremlin-Patchy black, white tortoiseshell molly with green eyes

Minty-Light grey molly with light blue eyes. Has lighter colored chest, stomach and muzzle(Willie mate)

Pounce-Yellow brown tabby tom with a lazy eye and a lower canine sticking out his mouth. Paler spot on his chest and amber eyes

Claw-Dark brown tom with long claws

Fury-Long furred tabby molly with one eye and scars across her muzzle and shoulders. wears a green studded tooth collar

Snag-Huge thick furred, ginger tabby tom with amber eyes

Willie-Brown tabby tom with a lighter muzzle and green eyes

Tess-Blue grey molly with a white chest, stomach and tail tip. White raindrop shaped marking on forehead and light green eyes

Snapper-Long furred brown, black, and white tom with yellow eyes. Has three scars across his chest and two on top of head. Has nicks in ears

Scraps-Patchy black, white tortoiseshell tom with a black tooth studded collar. His has fewer teeth than the others

Snake-Black and white tom with a blue tooth studded collar. Has an underbite, torn left ear and blue eyes

Ice-Black and white tom with a white tooth studded collar. Both ears are torn and blue eyes

Snipe-Ginger brown and black tom with a lighter brown underside and muzzle. Has a black tooth and claws studded collar. Has light orange eyes and torn ears.

Spot-Brown and white tabby molly with a scarred pelt and torn ears.

Chapter 1

[image]

The tom kit saw the bird in front of him, so close he can taste it. Suddenly he let out an alarmed yowl when rough hands grab him. Before he can react, he felt darkness covering him. His fur bush out as he became fully aware. His claws pierce the soft walls as he felt motion but he was still blinded. He can hear his twolegs and realize what a fool he been, falling asleep on the chair. He heard the cruelty in their voices as he felt like last night meal was going to escape his throat.

Where was the mother twoleg? He wonder as the motion finally stop. Feeling dizzy, he try to run out but couldn't find the exit. The cruel twolegs kits open the end of the covering and he rush out, straight into a wall. His paws didn't feel like they didn't belong to him as he lay there, listening to the cruel laughter as he blacked out. *I needs to escape this place* was his final thought. The next time he opened his eyes, he can hear the mother twoleg yelling at her kits. He quickly ran to his only safe spot in the house, under the stairs where he can see the front door. Due to his fur, he can hide in the shadows as long as he closed his eyes. Clawing the floor impatiently, he wait for his moment with his tail lashing. He knows their pattern well. The older kit will stomp out of the house and he only has a moment to get out.

He can feel his muscles tensing as he waited. The time seem to slow down as the door opened. Without missing a beat, he ran as fast as he could towards the door. He felt the twoleg's paw brush his back fur but it was too late. Using everything he had, he ran to a nearby bush, knowing that twolegs couldn't reach him here. His ears twitched as he heard footsteps coming close to the bush. He held his breath til they seem to give up and move away. He knew if the mother wasn't there, the kits would kick the bush to scare him out. Peace enveloped him as for the first time in his life, he felt safe and free. Looking out, he saw the large pine forest in the distance, wondering what was in there. He waited to hear the door close

before coming out of the bush. He walk to the house next door, wondering if Barry was outside and he can grab some food.

"Thought I heard some noise out here." A mew interrupted him as he jump on the fence. Looking down, he saw Barry laying down in a patch of sunlight, opening one eye staring at him.

"Sorry did I mess up your nap? Maybe I should keep my escape quiet." He mew back sarcastically. He jump down into his yard, sitting in front of him.

"Answer is no." Barry let out a yawn as he stretch and sat up. He begin to clean himself.

No? what does he mean by no. He didn't ask a question yet. His tail begin to lash before he got his emotions under control.

"Every time you escape, you come to me for food. Because of you, they give me less food! So no." Barry was cleaning his ear as he look at him.

"Sorry about that, but this time is different. I'm not going back, I'm getting out of here. Tired of the kits playing with me like I'm a toy. Maybe I can stay with you?" He said with a pleading look.

"We already tried that once, and your kits snuck in during a day to get you. My twoleg kits still have nightmares of that day. You made too much of a mess. Besides you always go back after disappearing for two or three days." Barry scoff as he turn to go inside.

"Fine. I will prove you wrong. Just you wait til I come back from the pine forest." His fur was bristling as his tail lash.

"The forest? Are you crazy? There are wild cats who eat other cats alive in there." Barry stop and turn around, staring at him in shock.

"That's foolish. Cats don't eat other cats. But I'm sure it's not that bad. I'm going to go and find out." He had a smug smile as he jump on the fence.

"Nice to know you Black Cat!" Barry yowl out. He twitched an ear before leaping back down to the other side. He can do this. Living

on his own, even get his own food. After all, he is six moons old. Looking at the pine forest, he start to get a sense of danger as he walk towards it.

The wind begin to blow towards him and he smelt many cat scents close to him. Putting his nose on the ground, he saw it was like a border. So he is safe if he don't cross the border? Looking back, he saw barry on the fence, watching him, his green eyes narrow. He knew what he was thinking. All that talk and he can't even cross the border. He quickly step over it, giving a small purr to himself when nothing happened. His stomach growl and he look at barry, waiting for him to go back into his yard before walking to his brother's house. Charlie will feed him. He also went back over the border, keeping an eye out for these wild cats. Good thing his brother lives around the corner from him, he thought as he jump into the yard. Besides it was still sunhigh so he might go when it is night and those wild cats be sleeping. Wild cats are still cats so they have to sleep.

"Charlie!" Are you home?" He yowl at the door. Sometimes his brother be gone, saying he exploring the twolegplace. His twolegs usually leave the cat door open so he probably won't mind if he go and eat some food. He look around, perking his ears to hear anything from the other side of the door. After a few minutes, he went through the cat door, heading straight to the food bowl. Before he reach it, a yowl sounded as a weight landed on his back. He quickly roll over to dislodge the weight, hissing loudly. He face his attacker, being surprise it was his brother.

"Black cat? you should know better than to come in without me knowing. I'm sorry." Charlie mew as he calm down. Charlie sat down, licking his chest in embarrassment.

"Charlie. What is wrong? You never just straight up attack before." His heart was beating fast as he sat down, smoothing down his fur. Looking at his brother, he saw that it look like he got in some fights. His fur was torn and he had old wounds on his back. No wonder he seem so jumpy. His movements was wary, like he expecting an attack to happen. But he is in his house. Houses are suppose to be safe.

He got up and rubbed his fur against his brother's side to relax him. He wrap his tail around his brother body until he felt his fur smoothing down. He knew that he can't force him to tell him what is wrong, so he led him to his cat bed. Maybe there is something to those wild cat rumors than he thought.

"Here Charlie. Just go to sleep and I'll be right by your side." He look worriedly at him since he haven't spoke.

"Thanks black cat. Just been a crazy night. You can have some food if there is anything left. Just need to rest." Charlie murmur before closing his eyes.

He look down at him, wondering what exactly is going on. He went back to the food bowl, letting out a sigh at the one pellet that was left. *Well it is better than nothing*, he thought as he ate it. Heading back, he curl up besides charlie, knowing he know more about these wild cats.

He slowly woke up, looking around before remembering he is at his brother's house. Charlie was still sleeping peacefully. He gave him a lick, whispering goodbye before leaving the house. He ran to the pine forest, crossing the border before he stop, looking back at the fence. He can hear the mother twoleg calling for him, shaking the food dish. Not this time. Not going back. He is leaving and maybe they will do better for the next cat. He quickly ran far before he can change his mind, passing by many trees until he was deep in the forest. Looking up, he smile as he saw the full moon. At least there is light enough to see, he thought to himself before starting to walk. His whiskers twitch anxiously as he heard an owl call and frogs croaking.

His ears perk as he heard soft pawsteps coming towards him from the dark path ahead. He raised his hackles, letting out a hiss as the wild cat appeared. It is an dark ginger tabby molly that had mouse in her mouth. She put it down as she glance at him with her dark green eyes. A real wild cat, he thought as his fur begin to bristle.

Chapter 2

[image]

The molly stare at him as he let out a small hiss. No way is he going to die without fighting back. His eyes widen as he saw her whiskers twitching in amusement. Does she find this funny? Yes he is way smaller than her but he can do damage. He fought other cats before during his escapes.

"You are trespassing in shadowclan territory kit. Go back home before I leave you a few scars to remember me by." The molly mew calmly.

He saw it wasn't an idle threat as her muscles ripple under her fur. Whoever she is, she was train to fight. Since she wasn't going to attack and wasn't finding him threatening, he sat down, wrapping his tail around his paws.

"What is shadowclan? Who are you?" He asks as she also sat down.

"You are a curious kittypet. My name is Russetfur. I am a warrior of shadowclan, one of four clans that live around here. You don't have a collar yet you reek of twolegs. Now go back home." Russetfur grab her mouse before turning to leave.

"Wait! What's a kittypet? And did your cats fight a pure black cat wearing a blue collar and has yellow eyes?" He mew out as he quickly got up.

She didn't answer as she ran farther into the forest. No, he not going to let her get away. He strain his ears to catch her pawsteps as he ran after her. The chase took a few minutes, and he was getting tired. Seeing the tip of her tail, he try to jump on her but the ground was wet, the mud sticking between his toes. Do these cats have web paws? He thought as he let out a mew as he struggle to get out of the mud. It seems he was sinking every time he struggle, the mud was up to his stomach. He let out a yowl as he felt teeth in his scruff, lifting him free of the mud. This is it. Guess he was

wrong. Cats do eat other cats. He close his eyes, only opening them when his paws land on dry land. He begin to lay down as he was exhausted from the running and struggling.

"Russetfur, why is there a kit out here? What clan does this kit belong to?" A brown tom said as he sniff him over.

"No clan Deerfoot. He's a kittypet that follow me. Was wondering if he can keep up. He did good if he made it to the marsh." Russetfur eyes had a glint in them that made him nervous. The whole chase was a test? No wonder he could only see her tail disappearing no matter how fast he run.

"Need to have Runningnose look at him. He seem exhausted. Brokenstar isn't going to like this though." Deerfoot mew softly as he look at him.

He was quiet as Deerfoot grab his scruff again, carrying him as Russetfur pick up the prey he had. Despite his exhaustion, he kept his eyes open to try to memorize the way. They stop in front of a thorn tunnel, where a ginger tom was standing guard.

"Russetfur, Deerfoot. Thought you was going for prey. What is this?" The tom demanded as he block their way.

"An injured kit, Scorchwind. Going to wait til Runningnose comes back from the gathering to look him over." Russetfur mew despite the prey in her mouth.

"Fine. Clean the mud from his fur so Runningnose can be quick about it." He grumble as he move out of the way.

Black cat let out an impressive hiss as Deerfoot carried him passed him. Scorchwind look at the kit in approval, seeing how despite his exhaustion, he had fighting spirit.

Russetfur put down the prey in the middle of a stone circle while Deerfoot let him down on ferns outside a den that smelt of herbs.

"Stay there and rest for now. Welcome to ShadowClan camp." Deerfoot murmur to him as he look around at the cats coming out of nearby dens. He left to get moss and dip it in a nearby stream.

There was so many cats, he thought as he felt a wet moss on his fur, cleaning off the mud. His ears flick warily as he saw two mollys coming towards him. One is a brown and cream and the other is pure black.

"Relax kit. Your fear scent is giving you away. Rowanberry, Darkflower. This kit is a kittypet that Russetfur found near the twolegplace border. Got stuck in the marsh and was sinking til I pull him out." Deerfoot growl as he finish cleaning the mud.

"So what your name kit?" Darkflower mew softly as she sat down.

"Why should we know the name of a kit that just going to leave soon? Soft kittypet that will go home in the morning. Bet he want to go home right now." Rowanberry mew with a twitch of her whiskers.

"I'm not soft." He wince as his voice came out in a small mew. He try to stand up but his legs was shaking and Deerfoot put a paw on him to keep him down. He let out a small hiss before he lay back down.

"Don't tease the kit otherwise he won't rest." Deerfoot said as he gave a small grin at the kit's spirit.

"My name is Black cat. That's what the twolegs kits call me." He raise his head as he heard loud meows coming close to the camp. He perk his ears towards the tunnel as he heard Scorchwind explaining what happened.

"Did you see how I impressed those fish faces?" A young voice said

"Two clans changing deputies at the same time? Wonder what RiverClan and ThunderClan is up to." A deep growl said.

"Did you hear that ThunderClan let a kittypet join them?" An elderly mew sounded.

"What that scent with Russetfur and deerfoot?" Another elderly mew said.

He saw Deerfoot and Russetfur sit next to him as he sat up. The two

mollies left, going to the prey pile. Russetfur nod in approval as he claw the ground anxiously. Soon he saw a stream of cats coming to him. In the lead was a dark brown tabby with a bent tail. These cats are not kittypets and his tail twitch as he saw battle scars on most of them. His eyes gleam as he look them over, hoping he can join them. From what he can see, they are strong, fast, and caring. Otherwise Deerfoot would left him drown in the mud. Russetfur would have just attack instead of warning him away. But now the brown tom is glaring down at him with a white tom with black paws on his right side. Now he only hope he can leave with his fur intact.

Chapter 3

[image]

Black cat met the orange eyes glaring down at him, with his ears flattening warily since the tom didn't say a word yet. It is like he is peeling back his fur to see the cat underneath. He didn't know what the tom is waiting for but he finally glance at the cats besides him.

"Explain." His voice was a deep growl as he look back at him. Black cat's fur is bristling as he glare back.

"This is Black cat, Brokenstar. Met him close to the twolegplace border while hunting with Deerfoot. He was in the forest and I warn him away. Since he is a kittypet, I thought by just leaving, he would head back home. That wasn't the case and he chase me, having questions. He got stuck in the marsh and was sinking in the mud. Deerfoot pull him out. Seeing how tired he was, I made the choice to bring him here so Runningnose can look him over." Russetfur mew is firm as she brush her tail on Black cat's side. Letting him know that it is going to be ok.

A small grey and white tom push pass the white tom when he heard his name. The white tom let out a small hiss as he got close to Black cat. His eyes widen as he took in his shakiness. These names are spot on, black cat thought as he saw the dried snot on the cat's nose.

"Blackfoot. Get ready for the apprentices ceremony while I chat with my senior warriors. Let Runningnose do what he does best. We aren't cruel." Brokenstar turn around while Blackfoot head to the nursery. The rest of the cats begin to sit near the big boulder that the other rock was leaning against. Black cat saw how organized everyone was and he watch everything with interest. Runningnose went into the den smelling of herbs as two queens with four kits between them came out with Blackfoot.

His ear twitch as he heard whispers about him but that was to be expected. He is a stranger and an intruder. Russetfur saw his

interest and begin to explain what is happening. She point out that Runningnose is their medicine cat and he went into the medicine den. Deerfoot glance at her with disapproval in his eyes as he turn to watch the proceedings. Brokenstar is in a corner near the oak tree with five other cats, Scorchwind was among them. There was three young cats sitting near a cave. Soon Runningnose came back holding a leaf wrap. He put the wrap in front of him, telling him to eat the herbs to gain his energy back. He did so, nearly gagging at the bad taste. Runningnose whiskers twitch as he check him over once again, nodding when he couldn't find any other wounds.

Brokenstar finish his meeting and his tail twitch anxiously as he wondered what it meant for him. He jump up on the boulder, looking down at the clan gathered beneath him.

"At tonight gathering, I'm sure you all heard that both Thunderclan and Riverclan have new deputies. Leopardfur and Lionheart is the new deputies. At least Shadowclan isn't weak in battle to lose important members of our clan. That isn't the only news. Windclan warn us about a badger they seen heading to our territory due to them chasing it. I thank Tallstar for the warning and I want patrols to keep an eye out. We smelt it near the burnt scyamore on the way back, so mentors keep your apprentices away from that area. I'm sure you are all aware of our visitor. I decided to give this kit a chance since he shown such promise. If he wants it of course. Who wouldn't want to be a Shadowclan cat?" At this indignant mutterings erupt among the clan.

"Brokenstar with all respect, he's a kittypet! Send him home to his twolegs otherwise he just be a burden. " A white tom call out.

"Maybe he can't be a warrior. Has no fighting skills due to lazing around all the time." A dark brown tom mutter.

Russetfur was whispering their names into Black cat ears. Ratscar and swampcloud was the loudest among the others.

Brokenstar's eyes narrow at them before he let out a loud yowl to quiet the clan. He was clawing the moss beneath his paws as his tail lash.

"Do you think I'm weak?" His voice was a deadly whisper. Both Ratscar and Swampcloud ears flatten as they look away from him.

"No. We meant no disrespect." They quickly muttered.

Black cat is filled with admiration for Brokenstar, seeing how quickly he gain control of the clan. What a leader. He be proud to be part of the clan with a leader like that. Russetfur whisper to him that Brokenstar has kittypet blood through his father, the past leader Raggedstar. He still saw glares but he didn't care. Brokenstar is proof that anyone can be in Shadowclan and be respected.

"I do want to join Shadowclan! Since so many think of me as lazy and weak, I will fight. I don't want you all to think I'm not going to help." He got up, running to the front of the rock, looking at the cats that surrounded him. His eyes gleaming as he slid his claws out in anticipation, his tail lashing, showing others that he is sincere. He remembers how he play fight with Charlie and he often complains he too rough. Now he can use what he knows to prove himself, if they even let him.

"Very well. This kit name is Nightkit. Since you are so eager to prove yourself, chose your opponent. No claws as we don't want serious injuries. This is only a spar after all." Brokenstar meow, his tone fill with approval.

Without a word, the rest of the cats move so there was only room for two cats to fight. Even though he wasn't as fit as the others, at least he got some energy back. Besides it not like he going to win. He just need to show that he wasn't a pushover. He knew this much as he walk to the clearing. This also must be a test, to see if he uses his brain in fights since he now have to chose his opponent. Not the ones he know as that be too obvious. Not Swampcloud or Ratscar either as they might accidently kill him though he really want to chose them to shut them up. He stare at all the cats around him, noticing how most seem to be expecting him to pick them. He saw Scorchwind with Darkflower, sitting together with their tails twinning, watching him closely. Seeing a small light brown tom, he was going to chose him til he saw the scars on his hind leg.

He wasn't expecting this to be so hard. That when he remembered

the cats that was sitting in front of the cave. They all seem healthy and not as old as the others. They was all close to the front. A brown tom, a grey tom and the smallest tom that seem to be equal to him.

"Him." He whip his tail to point to the small one. The tom walk out from the crowd, fur bristling as he gave a nod.

"Name is Littlepaw. Seems you have a good head on your shoulders. Only a mouse brain will chose to fight a cat twice their size." His blue eyes shimmer with emotion as he start pacing around him.

"Nice to meet you, Littlepaw. Thank you for this spar." He kept his eyes on him before leaping to him, Letting out a yowl, his ears flatten and his eyes into slits.

Littlepaw grin as he roll onto his back, his paws outstretched to catch him. His eyes widen as he was pin quickly. He use his back legs to push him off, being surprise at how heavy he was. He pant a bit before standing on his hind legs, letting out another yowl as he bat at Littlepaw, aiming at whatever he can reach. He knew he was doing good when he heard the reactions from the crowd. It seem his earlier tireness wasn't a problem since he felt only exhilaration as the fight continue. Littlepaw dodge him and trip him up, pinning him again. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't kick him off again. He spit furiously before Brokenstar call the end of the match.

Littlepaw let him up, giving him another nod before walking back to his spot. He shook the dirt from his pelt, hearing how he won some of them over. He heard that he could be a great fighter if he was train. Also that he had determination and how even when pinned he didn't give up. He felt pride envelop him as he clean himself, making sure his fur is smooth.

"Well well. We can use a spitfire like you. Do we all agree to give Nightkit a chance?" Brokenstar asks as he jump down from the boulder. The clan nodded as four cats walk up to stand besides him.

"Now it time for the moment we been waiting for." He mew as he beckon at the cats at the nursery.

"Finally!" A small voice pip up before her mother shush her. A few chuckles sounded as they watch the outspoken tortoiseshell walking fast to the front of the crowd. She was followed by black and white molly who was walking calmly with her head held high.

"Turtlekit. You have reached the age of six moons and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name you will be known as Turtlepaw. Your mentor will be Mossclaw. I hope Mossclaw will pass down all he knows to you." Brokenstar said as a big brown and white tom walk towards her.

"Mossclaw, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You had received excellent training from me, and you have shown yourself to be fair and determined. You will be the mentor of Turtlepaw and I expect you to pass all you know to her." Turtlepaw reach up to touch Mossclaw nose before moving to the side for the others.

Soon Gullpaw was apprenticed to Fernshade, Mousepaw to Applefur, and Gingerpaw to Hopeheart. Nightkit watch, wondering which cat would be his mentor. There was so many cats. That is when Brokenstar motion for him to come up. He shook off his worries as he walk forward with confidence. He will be the best apprentice to whoever gets him. He stood in front of Brokenstar, glancing worriedly at him before another cat came out of the crowd.

"Nightkit. You have reached the age of six moons and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name you will be known as Nightpaw. Your mentor will be Badgerfang. I hope Badgerfang will pass down all he knows to you." Nightpaw glance at Badgerfang, seeing how he looks like his namesake. He is a black and white tom with face stripes like a badger.

"Badgerfang, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You had received excellent training from Flintfang, and you have shown yourself to be loyal and honorable. You will be the mentor of Nightpaw and I expect you to pass all you know to him." Since he watch the others, he already knew what to do.

"I promised to do my best." He whisper as they touch noses.

"That all I will ask of you." He replied.

Turtlepaw! Gullpaw! Mousepaw! Gingerpaw! Nightpaw!" The clan roar their names into the sky.

He is now part of the clan. He noticed that not everyone was calling his name and knew that was to be expected. Soon the clan went to their dens as he look over at Badgerfang.

"Get some sleep, Nightpaw. Training will begin tomorrow at sunhigh. Don't be late." Badgerfang murmur as he point to the cave he saw before.

The other apprentices was already there, scrapping together their nests before curling to go to sleep. He saw Littlepaw motion to him so he went to him, seeing a nest made from moss and pine needles next to him.

"Here you go. It more comfortable than you would think. Goodnight." Littlepaw yawn as he fell into the nearby nest. He look around at the other apprentices, seeing that besides him was also Gullpaw on the other side. He softly walk past Turtlepaw, not knowing she was watching him curl up into the nest. He can't wait to see what the next day will bring.

Chapter 4

[image]

He open his eyes to darkness, wondering exactly where he was. Last thing he remembered was falling asleep in his nest. He start to walk around when he heard a pained mew coming from behind him. His fur bristling as he turn around, seeing his brother laying on his side in a pool of blood. He try to speak but realize his voice was gone. Rushing to his side, he heard his brother asking him if he forgot him already. Of course not he mouthed the words. His brother got up, begin to poke him over and over with his paw.

"Nightpaw! Wake up!" Brownpaw's mew woke him from his nightmare. It was his paw that was poking him. He quickly jump up, with his fur brushing out. Brownpaw's eyes widen at his fear scent before he calms down.

It was just a nightmare. Nightpaw look around and saw that Gullpaw, Turtlepaw, Gingerpaw and Mousepaw was still sleeping. The other nests are empty. He quickly groom himself as Brownpaw told him that Badgerfang was waiting for him. Thanking him, he rush out the den, nearly running into Ratscar.

"Watch it Kittypet!" He snarl before whipping his tail across Nightpaw's face. Nightpaw's claws slid out as he let out a hiss, arching his back. Brownpaw knock him aside to stop him from attacking. Ratscar gave a smug smile, seeing his reaction.

"We don't attack our clanmates!" He softly hiss before Ratscar walk away, heading to the pale ginger queen that he saw last night. He sat next to her, whispering in her ear, their tails twinning as he did so. Nightpaw knew he shouldn't let Ratscar get to him but he gets under his fur so easily. This is bad for a second impression. He took deep breaths to calm down, something he learnt when he was in his house. The twoleg kits just want a reaction and when he doesn't react, they leave him alone faster. He must remember this for dealing with Ratscar.

Nodding at Brownpaw to thank him for stopping him, he look around, hoping Badgerfang didn't see that display. He wince as he saw Badgerfang's amber eyes narrow on him. His fur bristle as he sharply flick his tail at him. Brownpaw left him to go to Stumpytail and they left the camp together. Nightpaw quickly pad to him, knowing he messed up. As he sat down, he saw that Badgerfang wasn't the only one that saw him lose his temper. He is sitting with the other mentors and the tom with the scarred hind leg.

"What was that?" Badgerfang's tone is grim, making him realize just how big he messed up. Maybe they are going to realize it useless to teach him and just toss him out the clan. Maybe the ones who was against his joining is right. It's not like they didn't see Ratscar's action but of course he the one in trouble. They didn't understand that the tail slap in the face is a huge disrespect in the twolegplace. The only action is to fight it out and make the other submit. It's what he did to Barry and now they are friends.

"Ratscar slap my face with his tail so I just want to leave a mark. Would have made me feel better." He said in a small growl.

"That the problem! You need to control your temper." Badgerfang start when Hopeheart interrupt him.

"What made you think that clawing a warrior just for a tail slap to be ok?" She asks as she stare at him. That when he realize that she at least is trying to understand.

"In Twolegplace, when a cat slap your face with their tail, it a sign of disrespect. Talking will lead you nowhere so the only choice is to fight it out and make them submit. If you win, you become good friends but if you lose...well you can't step near their place ever again. That and the fact you lose respect. All a cat has to do is get the cat that beat you to force you away. I realize that this isn't Twolegplace so I guess you are kicking me out now. Just show me the way and I be on my way." He saw the mentors' eyes widen when he finished speaking.

"We don't kick cats out just for one mistake. Ratscar always been a bad tempered cat. But he good to have on your side in battles. Name is Volewhisper. Welcome to Shadowclan. You can ask about

my leg. It is ok." Volewhisper gave a friendly flick with his tail.

"What Volewhisper said is correct. When you stay with us long enough, you will understand. Just don't do it again. Anyway, you already met Fernshade, Hopeheart, Applefur, and Mossclaw. The molly next to Ratscar is Dawncloud. Unlike Ratscar, she is kind yet stern."

Badgerfang begin to show him around the camp and just finished when the other apprentices got up. He love how the dens was all protected. The warriors' den is under a bramble bush by the entrance and the leader's den is under the roots of the oak tree. The nursery is in a hollow, shielded by a thorn bush and only Brightflower is there now. Badgerfang explain that queens often return to warrior duties when their kits are apprenticed. On the far side of the medicine den, is a pool of water with pine trees overhead. He met Nightpelt who was the only elder awake. Their den is underneath thick branches next to a stump where they sun themselves. He also noticed another broken tree stump that wasn't far from the elder's den.

That is when Badgerfang told him it is apprentices job to care for the elders. Badgerfang also explain how the whole camp is in a hollow surrounded by brambles and pine trees. They soon return back and Nightpaw went to get something to eat. He heard the other apprentices heading towards him and mew hello.

"Why are you still here?" Turtlepaw asks when she saw him grabbing a frog from the prey plie.

"Turtlepaw! Be nice to your clanmate." Mossclaw said, shock at how rude she was being.

"But he not part of Shadowclan. He's a kittypet pretending to be one of us. It not like he grew up here." Turtlepaw argued as she grab a mouse while the other apprentices look at her in shock.

"Turtlepaw! It not his fault he was born in the Twolegplace. Never been this rude before. Forgive my sister. She still mad because you overshadow our apprentice ceremony." Gullpaw gave her a look of disgust as she got a lizard before walking fast so she won't walk

with her. She gave him a shy smile as his fur was bristling.

"I can defend myself." He grumbled as he torn a leg from the frog. Looking at the others, he saw Mousepaw and Gingerpaw sitting with Turtlepaw. Which means the only friend he got is Gullpaw.

Seeing her looking downcast gave him a feeling of guilt so he apologize while laying his fur flat. He didn't respond and just decides to ignore Turtlepaw. He wasn't a picky eater so he enjoy the rubbery texture as he finish the frog. He watch as Ratscar rub cheeks with both Mousepaw and Gingerpaw so that answers why they agree with Turtlepaw. Dawncloud also chat with them, telling them to listen to their mentors and to be nice. He saw Gullpaw get up to ran to a black tom with white chest and paws, purring as he talk to her. Another molly went up to Turtlepaw, purring as she told her not to be rude to her mentor. He overheard her saying yes Wishflame and I will make you and Whitethroat proud.

While watching them with their family, he begin to wonder about his brother. He hope Charlie is ok. He is a bit suspicious of Gullpaw but considering she the only one who giving him a chance, he decides to give her a chance.

"Ok now let go explore the territory. Turtlepaw, since you been so rude, we are going to explore by ourselves until you learnt to be nice." Mossclaw said sternly as they walk towards the thorn tunnel.

"So I don't have to be around the kittypet? Sounds good to me. Can Mousepaw and Gingerpaw come?" She asks with a bounce in her step.

"No. So you are going to be alone." Mossclaw said as he lead her away from the others.

"Alone?" For once, Nightpaw can hear a bit of panic in her voice. Seems she can't stand being alone. After seeing them walk away in the opposite direction, he start to breathe easier. As if a weight was lifted from his shoulders.

"Nightpaw, you are blocking the entrance. Come on." Gingerpaw call out as she saw him standing there. He ran to catch up to the

others as they begin to walk through the forest. He love how the sun filter through the trees, giving it a mysterious feeling to it. Badgerfang is standing next to him, watching his expression light up at the scenery around them.

"So you can smile." Badgerfang teased as Nightpaw quickly stop. His tail tip twitch as they walk behind the others. He knew Badgerfang means well but showing emotions always got him in trouble before. His ear flick as he heard the others asks questions and their mentors answer. Looking down, he can see the paw prints made from the clan cats so knew this must be a normal path that they use a lot.

As they walk, the trees begin to thin out, replaced by bushes and reeds with feathery tops that rattled together in the breeze. The ground begin to become marshy and wet. He jump back to dry ground, shaking the mud from his paws. He isn't going to get stuck in the mud again. A tail brush his flank, and he knew Badgerfang was showing him the way so he won't get stuck again.

"Not all the marsh is the deep part that you fell into. It was night and you didn't know our territory so of course you couldn't see clearly." Badgerfang reassured him as they walk. Nightpaw's fur was bush out and he knew he was going to get tease later but he didn't care. They didn't know what it felt like, thinking you was going to die and struggling did nothing. He was powerless. A feeling he come to hate. He pant heavily as he sat next to Mousepaw as the mentors stop them at the end of the marsh. Mousepaw roll her eyes as she move so a tail length was between them.

"We catch frogs here. Anyone know what the best way to catch frogs?" Applefur asks as everyone sat down.

"Jump on them?" Gullpaw asks. Nightpaw took deep breaths to calm down so he can listen and learn.

"We swipe them with our claws." Gingerpaw said as she gave a swipe with her left paw.

"We pierce their legs so they can't hop?" Nightpaw asks as he look at the others.

"I agree with Gullpaw." Mousepaw mew as they wait for the answer.

"You are only half right. We do jump on them and all the other stuff but you are missing the key component. Teamwork. What good is jumping on a frog if they can just head back to the marsh. You need to learn how to work together, one to pounce and the other to stop it from going back. We will work on that later." Hopeheart meow as she lead the way.

They walk through a belt of pine trees when she raise her tail to stop them. Nightpaw's ears perk forward til he caught what she heard. His eyes widen as he heard a familiar yowl. That was Charlie! He shot off towards the yowling sound, not listening when he heard Badgerfang and the others calling him back. He didn't notice the trees growing more sparsely and reddish. He knew he made it back to the Twolegplace when he saw the houses and fences that surround each den. That when he saw his brother, surrounded by three cats, two which was wearing spiked collars clawing at him. He lunged at the black and white tortoiseshell tom, landing on his back, clawing him good.

"Scraps!" A ginger tabby tom yell as he aim a claw at Nightpaw. Nightpaw jump off, landing next to Charlie, spitting furiously, his fur bush out to try to scare them. He didn't take his eyes off of them since he was now surrounded as well. He notice the other cat, who is a molly with one eye.

"Snag, Scraps, let show them what happens when they cross Bloodclan." The molly said with hate in her eye. They raise their claws to strike when the rest of the patrol attack them from behind.

Nightpaw watch as Hopeheart swipe at the molly, reaching down to bite her leg hard. The molly claw her flank before running away. Nightpaw jump on Scraps again, distracting him while Badgerfang aim a back kick at him. Jumping off, he claw his side, doing as much damage as he can. Scraps manage to tear his left ear tip before running away.

"This isn't over you forest cats!" Snag growl as he slowly back away. Nightpaw was going to attack when Badgerfang stop him with his front paw.

"Leave. You aren't welcome here." Applefur hiss as Snag finally ran after his companions.

He quickly kneel besides Charlie, licking the blood from his pelt.

"Charlie. Brother please wake up. I'm here." Nightpaw mew softly as he look him over. There was numerous wounds, so many deep cuts that it took him a moment to see that he was still breathing.

"I will go to get Runningnose." Fernshade mew as she quickly left. Applefur ran to a nearby log to grab cobwebs. She place them on the cuts, watching carefully to see some of the bleeding stop. She also put some on his ear but he didn't notice.

Nightpaw wasn't blind to her effort, making sure to say thank you before keeping his eyes on his brother. His ear perk up when he heard running coming towards them. He didn't know how long he kneel there, watching his breathing but it seems like hours before Runningnose came up.

"Seems Fernshade wasn't exaggerating. These look like wounds from a badger instead of cats. I will do my best to save him Nightpaw." Runningnose mew as he place down a couple of leaf wraps that seem to have herbs in them.

Gingerpaw put her tail around his shoulder to lead him away so Runningnose can work. Seems like she no longer felt any animosity toward him so he let her lead him to where the others was sitting.

He explain how it is his brother and he didn't know the cats who attacked him. He didn't even know that Charlie was having trouble with Bloodclan. He hope for his brother to live so he can say goodbye. Badgerfang told him that he understood his reaction but not to do that ever again. Surprising everyone, Gingerpaw and Mousepaw spoke up in his defense, saying he couldn't let his brother die. And how brave he was to jump in there when he was clearly outnumbered. Gullpaw join in, saying that what Shadowclan do. We don't stand back to watch cats killing another when it's a chance to fight.

Runningnose came towards them, saying to not get too mad at

Nightpaw, for he saved his brother's life. Nightpaw saw a glimmer of respect in Runningnose's eyes as he check his ear. He put a bit of herbs so it doesn't get infected before putting new cobwebs on it.

"Well you won't win any beauty contest but it going to heal in time." He joke as he went back to the camp. The other mentors told their apprentice it was time to head back to camp, knowing that Nightpaw want to talk to his brother alone.

They said their goodbyes, friendlier than when they started and he went back to his brother. Charlie eyes was open though a bit pained but he still smile when he saw Nightpaw. Badgerfang wait a bit away to give them privacy.

"Thanks Black Cat. I would be dead if it wasn't for you." He mew softly.

"Name is Nightpaw now. I'm part of Shadowclan, an apprentice. Won't come back since I live with them. And this is goodbye. Don't worry about me. Just stay inside until you are healed. Charlie please do this for me. No more exploring." He brush his tail on his brother's flank, being careful not to touch the wounds.

"This was supposed to be my last day exploring. My Twolegs are taking me to the vet tomorrow. Goodbye Black...Nightpaw. Claw a few of those cats for me. I know I'm going to be as lazy as Barry when I come back." Charlie purr as he slowly got up. Nightpaw help him over the fence, purring as he watch him go inside for the last time. He let out a loud meow before heading back to Badgerfang.

"It ok if you want to stay. No one going to blame you. Being part of Shadowclan is a harsh yet rewarding life." Badgerfang mew as they walk back, seeing him look back at Charlie's house.

"I made my choice. And hey now I fit in with my new battle scar. Sorry that we couldn't explore the rest of the territory." He said as he glance at him, worry that he might be upset.

"It's fine. Besides this is an interesting day. After we get our wounds look at, I can teach you some battle techniques, seem you are going to need them, the way you jump into fights."

Badgerfang flick his whiskers in amusement as he saw Nightpaw smiling with his chest puff out.

Chapter 5

[image]

As Nightpaw and Badgerfang pad through the forest, Badgerfang stop as he scent some prey. Nightpaw stop besides him, looking curious.

"Here your first hunting lesson. What do you scent?" He mew in a whisper. Nightpaw open his mouth to drag scents over his scent glands. The scent of mouse was a fox length away. His ears prick up as he heard the mouse eating a seed. His tail begin to swish on the ground.

"Good. Now keep your tail still and raise it a bit so it not brushing the ground and creep forward." Badgerfang put a paw on Nightpaw's swishing tail. Nightpaw nodded as he let the tail go. He watch as Nightpaw begin to crept towards the mouse.

Nightpaw can see the mouse now. He keep going until he step on a stick, the noise alerting the mouse. He try to chase after it but missed it when it went under the roots of a nearby tree. Nightpaw let out a frustrated growl before heading back to Badgerfang. He nearly had it, could feel the tail when it dive into the roots.

"Did good for your first try. Now you know to keep focus on the ground. Now you need to look, scent and listen. Remember everyone misses a catch once in a while. Even me. Now try again." Badgerfang said as he lead him to a bush that they hid under. Suddenly the mouse that Nightpaw chase before, climb out and sat on the tree root. Nightpaw eyes narrow as he focus on it. Badgerfang whisper to stay downwind from it and use the bush. He nodded as he crept backwards, keeping the bush between him and the mouse. He watch as the mouse left the root, sniffing around. He walk, being mindful of the sticks and leaves on the ground until he was blocking the mouse hole. He check the breeze to make sure he was still downwind. He lunge with both claws out, throwing the mouse in the air to stun it before giving it a killing bite.

"Well done. Now we give thanks to Starclan for the prey. Starclan is our ancestors who watch over us. Come, I will explain it on the way." Badgerfang mew as he got out of the bush.

Nightpaw grab his fresh kill as he listen to Badgerfang explain the warrior code, starclan and silverpelt. The sun is low in the sky as they reach the thorn tunnel. Heading inside, Badgerfang told him to put it on the fresh kill pile. And then to grab something to eat.

Nightpaw saw the other apprentices sitting near the apprentice den, talking to each other. His eyes narrow as he saw Turtlepaw with the others. Sensing his stare, she turn around to see who was watching her. He quickly drop his glance when he drop the mouse in the pile. He twitch his whiskers when he saw Ratscar coming towards him. Ratscar stop in front of him. Remember to not react to anything he says, Nightpaw think as he stare at him.

"Is what Fernshade says true? Did you really jump in the middle of three rogues to save a kittypet? Your brother?" His voice is low, like he was uncomfortable with what he is saying.

"Yes. I can't help where I spent my first six moons but I'm not going to be ashamed of it." Nightpaw felt like his paws is glue to the ground as he wait for Ratscar response. Even now he can see Ratscar's surprise in his eyes and bristling fur. Before long Ratscar gave a small sigh as his fur lay flat.

"It seems I judged you too harshly. Who knew that kittypets can have warrior blood. I will be keeping a close eye on your training. Good work on the catch as well." Ratscar gave a polite nod as he grab Nightpaw's mouse and a black bird. Nightpaw tail curl up as he felt happy that he got Ratscar's approval. He grab a frog and head to the apprentices. Littlepaw was in the middle of telling them about the borders.

"So there I was with Clawface, Yellowfang, and Tallpoppy checking the Thunderclan border. We was remarking the border when I saw Darkstripe, Dustpaw and Mousefur. Darkstripe is Dustpaw new mentor. Darkstripe try to start a fight but Yellowfang is too smart for it. She has a tongue sharp as claws. So we wait for them to make the first move as Yellowfang call him Dirtstripe. Darkstripe nearly

got run over on the thunderpath if Mousefur hadn't pull him back. Thunderclan cats aren't too bright. We wait for them to leave first, which they did. The Windclan border wasn't as exciting since nothing happen there." Littlepaw purr as he recount the tale.

Nightpaw sat between Wetpaw and Gullpaw, as he listen to the other apprentices. Wetpaw told them about shadow training. Nightpaw ears perk as he talk about hiding in the tree's shadow and how to use them to ambush your enemy. To other cats, it like you vanish and then reappear out of nowhere. It an advanced battle tactic.

"Hey what happened to your ear, Nightpaw?" Brownpaw asks as Nightpaw was busy eating the frog.

"Oh you didn't hear? On our patrol we ran into three rogues and he jump into the middle to protect a kittypet. Then we found out that kittypet is his brother! After a fight where Badgerfang and Hopeheart sent them running back to their place. Fernshade stop the rest of us from jumping in. He is so brave." Gullpaw excitedly mew.

"Sound like he is dumb to me. Surprise he only got out with a torn ear." Turtlepaw scoff as she glare at him.

"What is your problem with me? Bet even if I fought all of the rogues you will still have a complaint. What is it you want?" Nightpaw let out a hiss as he felt the anger in him rises. Would she always look at him like he is beneath her? His tail lash as he dug his claws into the frog. He angrily tore off another piece while he glare at her.

"Just admit that you don't really belong here. We don't need kittypets in our clan!" Turtlepaw growls with a tail lash of her own.

" Does this mean we don't belong here Turtlepaw. Our mother is Wishflame and she is Brokenstar's sister. Which mean like him we got Kittypet blood in us." Gullpaw mew softly.

"What? No! I don't know!" She stutter as she quickly left, heading into the den. Nightpaw's eyes widen as he realize that her hatred

must be because looking at him reminds her of her bloodline.

"I will go to her. She usually not like this, really." Gullpaw left as well. Nightpaw clear his throat before asking about medicine cats. He just want the awkward silence to end.

"Medicine cats are our healers. They have a knowledge of herbs to help heal our battle wounds and they talk to Starclan. Every half moon they go to the moonstone, which is easier for us cuz we don't have to cross any other clan territory. It a meeting for medicine cats only. No one but them knows what happens at the meeting. Also unlike warriors, they don't fight. They care for all cats, no matter what clan they are from." Littlepaw voice held a tone of awe as he explain.

Nightpaw saw his expression, thinking on how important medicine cats really are. There was so much to remember. He finish eating, seeing Blackfoot coming towards them. Wonder what the deputy want with them, his ear twitch as he listen to the chatter between Mousepaw, Brownpaw and Gingerpaw.

"Nightpaw, Brokenstar wants to see you in his den. I assume you should at least know where that is at." Blackfoot voice is gruff as his tail point to the oak tree's roots.

"Now?" Nightpaw asks. "Now if you can find the time." Blackfoot reply as he watch Nightpaw hurry to the den.

"For the rest of you, take care of the elders. Where is Turtlepaw and Gullpaw? They need to learn." Was the last thing he heard Blackfoot said as he stood in front of the den.

Seem Brokenstar scent him as he said enter. He did so, seeing that the den is dark and there was a nest in the back. There is sunlight filtering through the den which only made the shadows darker. He saw Boulder and Brokenstar sitting nearby, close to the nest. Their eyes gleam in the darkness and he wondered if he was in trouble.

"Nightpaw. Come closer. Describe the rogues you saw to Boulder." Brokenstar had a serious tone, nearly a growl. They both is laying down with their paws tuck beneath them. Nightpaw copy them as

he told Boulder about the weird collars two of the rogues was wearing.

"They called themselves Bloodclan. The molly seem like the leader as she was ordering the other two. The molly had one eye and scars across her muzzle." Nightpaw mew sounded loud as the other two listen.

"Bloodclan you say? No she isn't the leader. Brokenstar, you need to warn the clan. I know Bloodclan because I was a part of it. Grew up in it. They are not your normal rogues. The leader is Scourge. He is very deadly despite his small size. One claw is enough to kill a warrior as he has dog teeth in his claws. I seen it which is why I left. I'm not the only one who manage to escape as Barley was part of Bloodclan too. Though he left before my mother had me. She whisper that we would escape but she got caught. It's why I never changed my name. Only thing I had left from my mother since her death freed me from staying in Bloodclan. I ran into Russetfur group and the rest is history." Boulder was shaking a bit as he recount his history.

Brokenstar tail brush his fur, the first time Nightpaw saw any empathy from the imposing leader.

"Did this cat tell you why they was attacking kittypets?" Brokenstar mew was gruff as if he was holding in his rage. Nightpaw only shook his head.

"Boulder, you are dismissed." Boulder nod his head before leaving the den, memories swimming in his eyes. Nightpaw begin to get nervous since it was only him. He didn't realize how comforting it was to have another cat there. His tail tip begin to twitch as Brokenstar's eyes stare into his own.

"Nightpaw. Be honest. Do you wish to go back to your kittypet life? Did I make a mistake when I invited you into my clan?" Brokenstar huge tail swish once as he stare at him like he was prey beneath his claws.

"No!" Nightpaw meow as he jump up. He need to convince that he never want to go back. Maybe if he told him what he left behind, he

would understand. "When I saw Charlie, he the kittypet I saved and my brother. I realize that I would become lazy like him, only able to come out when the Twolegs let me. That what you are expecting me to say right?" He saw a flash of shock in Brokenstar's eyes as he gave a curt nod.

"Let me tell you that not all Twolegs are nice. I wasn't safe in my house. The mother Twoleg is the only reason I'm alive. She had two kits, and they would have killed me. They shaved the fur from my body, took moons before it grew all back. They once try to feed me bad food. Went to the vet for that one. Love to shove me in a bag and toss me from up high. Also love to swing me around til I was so dizzy I couldn't run." Nightpaw's fur was bristling as he felt a red hot rage overtake him. "I was just a toy to them. I had to leave. Couldn't take it anymore. Everyone thinks oh your life was so easy. Lay around and get fed. Not mine! Sometimes I had to go two nights because the mother wouldn't be home til then. I had to sleep with all my senses spread out in case the kits come around. Couldn't rest fully either. There was no where safe for me to go. I try escaping many times but I go back cuz I didn't know anything else." He close his eyes to calm himself down.

He jump as he felt a tail brush his fur down. Opening his eyes, he lay back down as Brokenstar gave a rare smile.

"I see. Apparently you are gaining the Clan's respect. Keep it up. Your determination will do wonders here. Now come along, for I must address the clan." Brokenstar got up, letting Nightpaw led the way out. Nightpaw watch as Brokenstar jump on top the Clanrock.

"May all those who hunt in the Shadows gather here beneath the Clanrock for a clan meeting!" Brokenstar's face was back to being an emotionless mask as he wait for the clan to gather.

Nightpaw met the apprentices questioning glances with a shrug as he sat down next to Darkflower and Stumpytail. They sat near him, waiting for the meeting to start.

"Boulder told me some concerning news about the rogues that Hopeheart's patrol ran into. Bloodclan is their name and they are very dangerous. Want all patrols to keep a lookout for any cats

wearing collars that has cat and dogs bones in them. We don't know exactly what they were looking for or what they want but they did say it isn't over. Shadowclan don't back down from threats and we will fight them if we have to! This wouldn't be the first time we battle with rogues." At this the clan start to cheer Shadowclan. Nightpaw joining in as he felt the connection and loyalty. Brokenstar let it continue for a bit before raising his tail for silence. " As for the badger, she made a den just past our border but we can't let a badger settle so close near here. I want two patrols to chase her out. Blackfoot, you are in charge of that. Dismiss!" He jump down, nodding at the clan as he saw a lot of cats heading straight to Blackfoot, hoping to get on the badger patrol.

He sigh softly, wishing he can join but of course it was too dangerous for apprentices. He saw the other apprentices get turn away.

"Ready for your first battle training?" Badgerfang mew made him jump since he wasn't paying attention. How could he forget. He thought as he follow behind Badgerfang. As he pad alongside him, he thought about the rogues. Why was they beating up his brother? Doesn't seem right since kittypets hold no threat to them. Maybe Charlie was exploring and he trespass on their territory. How could he get Turtlepaw to be nice to him? Now he knew it was cuz of her own issues, he still don't know how to talk to her without her hissing.

"Ok we are here. This is the training hollow, has soft pine needles so cats won't get hurt during training." Badgerfang said as he stop.

Nightpaw's eyes widen as he saw who was waiting in the hollow. Runningnose greet him with a raise tail.

"Greetings Nightpaw. Don't go too easy on me. I'm not as fragile as I look." He sat down with a glint of mischievous in his eyes.

Chapter 6

[image]

Nightpaw glance at Badgerfang and Runningnose before sitting down. Maybe this is a test of some sort. See if he knew about clan culture. Good thing he asks Littlepaw about medicine cats, otherwise he would fail.

"I won't fight Runningnose. He's a medicine cat and Littlepaw told me medicine cats don't fight." He look at them again as their whiskers is twitching with amusement.

"That is correct, if this was any other clan. Unlike the others, we train even our medicine cats in warrior skills. You see, long ago there was this ThunderClan cat. She went crazy and during a half moon meeting, killed her own medicine cat for some reason. Sloefur, the ShadowClan medicine cat at the time, found his body right by the Moonstone. Anyway when Sloefur was late coming back, he told the leader at the time what happened. Forgot who was the leader at the time but they felt it was best for all medicine cats to learn warrior skills." Badgerfang explain with a nod to Runningnose.

"This is so we can defend ourselves in case the camp is attack. We do have claws too. Makes no sense not to learn since we are important to the wellbeing of our clan. Today we are just learning basic skills so it not like you can hurt me." Runningnose went to one end of the hollow, waiting for Nightpaw to take his place.

Nightpaw went to the other end, looking at Badgerfang for instructions. Badgerfang show him a front paw blow as he stood next to him. Nightpaw's claws was sheathed for this technique. Badgerfang had to correct his stance so his blows had power behind the hits. He had to do ten correct blows with each front paw before moving on to the next technique. Runningnose also gave him advice, knowing how hard it is for someone who never fought with techniques before. Nightpaw felt the muscles within his paws getting tiring. They rest a bit before Badgerfang show him how to

do a back kick. He watch closely, seeing Badgerfang check behind him before letting loose a kick using both back paws, balancing carefully on his front paws. He quickly got into the pose, watching his mentor check his stance, nosing a leg that wasn't right. Badgerfang told him to close his eyes, use his whiskers, tail and ears to sense when Runningnose is behind him.

He heard Runningnose coming close, his ears moving to track him. He felt Runningnose gave his tail a nip and he let loose a back kick but fell while performing it. He open his eyes, giving a frustrated growl before going back into the pose. Who knew that this move would be so hard. He thought as he close his eyes again.

"Remember to use your tail for balance. It's going to take a few tries but you are doing great for your first time." Badgerfang encourage him. He try a few more times, managing to kick out before Runningnose nip his tail. He got the sense right but he falls every time. Badgerfang told him to head to a tree, and put his hind legs up on it but keep his front paws on the ground.

He did so, wondering why is he doing this. He asks and Badgerfang told him it was to get use to balancing on his front paws but with support. He nodded as he close his eyes, using his senses as well. They was still dull due to him spending his life in a den. Yes he can sense twolegs with no issue but other cats is going to take some time. He now can recognize most of ShadowClan scents. He open his eyes as he use his front paws to walk while keeping his back legs in the air. Despite falling a few more times, he got use to the feeling. The sun was setting when he is finally able to pull it off. Badgerfang asks him if he thinks he can spar using just those moves. He said yes as he also want to test himself.

After another break, Runningnose was ready at one end of the hollow. Nightpaw faced him, his tail and whiskers showing his excitement. The only rule is no claws and first one pinned loses. They both charge at each other when Badgerfang told them to start. He jump over Runningnose, landing behind him as he did a front paw blow on his hind leg. Runningnose use a back kick, hitting him hard. It cause him to land a few feet from him. Shaking his head, he quickly got up, sensing Runningnose behind him, he did a back kick of his own, feeling it hit. He turn around, aiming a lot of front paw

blows on his head. Runningnose grin as he dodge these, his body moving like a snake as he knock Nightpaw off his paws. He quickly pin him, telling him he did good against a seasoned medicine cat. Letting him up, Runningnose check him over for any lasting bruise from the back kick. Nightpaw purr as he gave it his all. Maybe he would win if he knew more moves.

"What was that move you used to knock me off my paws?" He asks Runningnose, with respect glowing in his eyes.

"An advanced move that you will learn one day. Don't try to rush ahead of yourself." Runningnose eyes twinkle as they clean their pelts.

"Remember that you just started. Don't worry for I will teach you all our techniques and soon no one will be able to battle you without wounds." Badgerfang adds as they start to head back to camp.

Nightpaw purr at that as he saw the patrols looking at something in the ground. Blackfoot was stabbing at something while talking to the two badger patrols. Weird as he thought they would have left by now.

"Badger wasn't there. So now Blackfoot is getting the patrols to search for traces of the badger to make sure it not coming back. Yellowfang is one of our best trackers so she in charge of one while Swampcloud is in charge of the other." Volewhisper said to Badgerfang as they went to the prey pile.

"So can apprentices join or is it still too dangerous?" Nightpaw asks with a hopeful gleam in his eyes.

"Sorry but no. You just only learnt two fighting moves and none will help against a badger. Besides you need to rest." Badgerfang said with a frown. Runningnose gave a nod.

"Also I believe someone want to talk to you alone." Runningnose said as his tail point to Turtlepaw who was watching them from afar. Nightpaw grab a mouse before heading to her. He saw Runningnose head to the medicine den while Badgerfang went to talk to Blossomsky and Tallpoppy.

Putting the mouse down, he asks if she wants to share. Her eyes widen before giving a small nod. He step back to give her first bite before digging in himself. His ear twitch as he heard her paws shuffling in nervousness.

"I'm sorry for the way I been towards you. Can we start over?" Turtlepaw mew softly. Nightpaw gave a smile as he nod.

"Sure. I learnt two battle moves so was wondering if we can practice together some time?" Nightpaw meow as they finish the mouse.

"That will be nice. But don't think I will go easy on you." she let out a playful hiss with her eyes narrow.

"Wouldn't want it any other way." Nightpaw mew with a small purr.

They watch as the two patrols left the camp and Blackfoot came towards them. Turtlepaw, why don't you show Nightpaw where to get moss. It something he needs to learn since one of apprentices' jobs is taking care of nests. It nice that you two are finally getting along." Blackfoot left them as a border patrol led by Cinderfur came in. He excuse himself as they rush to him.

"We found pieces of prey near the Windclan border. Seems like they are stealing prey again. We need to teach them a lesson since they didn't learn last time." Cinderfur growl as he pace back and forth.

"We will teach them as many times as we need to." Russetfur hiss with her tail lashing.

"No one steals from Shadowclan and get away from it." Blossomsky growls softly.

Turtlepaw brush her tail on Nightpaw's side to get his attention. He wish he could be in a fight against the other clans. Sighing he follow Turtlepaw to outside the camp.

As she explain how to claw the moss off without having splinters, he went to the moss to try. He can see how this too is a type of training, learning how to control clawing instead of going all out. If he claw carelessly, then the moss would be full of splinters.He stop

as he got a good amount. Turtlepaw went to the pile, getting the splinters out.

"Good for your first try. We can give this to Runningnose as he uses moss as well." Turtlepaw look over at Nightpaw as he went to the pile to get the splinters out as well. They work together in silence, rolling the moss into a ball and tucking it under their chin.

After they gave the moss to Runningnose, Nightpaw saw Nightpelt motioning to him to join him as the other elders were asleep. The moon is rising as he went to see what the elder want from him. They went to the elder, who asks them how they are liking the training. Turtlepaw says her training seems to be tough due to Mossclaw stern ways. Nightpaw says Badgerfang seem a bit softer but maybe it due to him. But he does make sure he learns from his mistakes, and he learning how to stop expecting to be good right away. Nightpelt purr as he heard that, saying they got good mentors and their differences is due to their apprentices. He then told them that he was Brokenstar's mentor when he was younger. Before he can continue, Clawface came up, saying he not that old. Nightpelt gave him a hearty bump with his head, saying he not as young as he was. Nightpaw watch this with interest since Clawface didn't look like he would be friendly to elders.

"You seem surprised, Nightpaw. Nightpelt here is my brother. Bet you didn't think someone like him is related to me." He gave a throaty purr as he bop Nightpelt on the head with a paw.

"Heard about what you did for your brother. I can respect a cat who is fearless like that. Unlike the other clans who hate fighting, we love it. It what makes ShadowClan so great. Going to head for some night hunting. See ya Nightpelt. Will bring you a mouse since I know that your favorite." Clawface bump his head into Nightpelt's side before leaving the camp.

"Can you explain the other Clans? I want to know what so different between them. Aren't we all cats? I know this will sound dumb but why can't we get along?" Nightpaw mew softly while looking at Nightpelt with confusion.

"I only heard about WindClan. They are scrawny but very agile cats

who lived on the moors. As a kit, I remember seeing Whitethroat bearing a lot of cuts on his body after fighting them." Turtlepaw meow as she looks at Nightpelt, wondering if she was right.

Nightpelt lay down, letting them know to get comfortable. They glance at each other before copying him.

"You would be right about WindClan but that isn't all. They are faster than the prey they catch, which is rabbits. Tallstar seem like an okay leader even if he doesn't know what his clan is doing half the time. That how they get away with prey stealing. Always stealing mice and birds, never lizards or frogs. Otherwise they will get caught by Deadfoot, their deputy. Those rabbit munchers smell like their home and the prey they eat so we can always tell when they are on our side of the border. We have no rabbits in our marsh. They strike fast and hard in battle, so always keep an eye on them. Don't give them any room to run, otherwise you will lose the fight. Fighting on the moors is hard but we got counters. You will learn that much later." Nightpelt made sure they was listening closely before continuing.

"We don't need to worry about RiverClan. I heard that due to the rogues, you never saw our territory. Shame that is. Badgerfang needs to hurry up with that. Won't do any good if you get lost on our own territory. Mossclaw did right by you, Turtlepaw." He start to have a small coughing fit.

"Sorry about that. My old sickness is acting up again." Nightpelt said as it finally stop.

"Don't know much about RiverClan except what is shown during gatherings. They can swim and smell of fish. Often overhear them bragging about what shells they collect. Due to not sharing a border, all we know is they live on the river. Crookedstar is the leader and despite his appearance, he seem like a good leader. RiverClan seem happy and content. Unless they are near ThunderClan. Always meowing about some rocks that they fight over. Which is what I overhear. Us cats with black pelts are great at overhearing things." He gave a throaty purr.

"Last is ThunderClan. Out of all the clans, they like to think of

themselves as the heroes of the forest for some reason. It is thanks to the Thunderpath that we rarely fight them or have anything to do with them. They are so prideful so to rile them up, just insult them. They hide in the undergrowth of their forest so be prepare to get surprise attack. Bluestar is the exception as she seems always calm, cool and collected. Tigerclaw is a notable warrior since he is a fierce fighter. Many of our warriors been in the medicine den due to his claws. Heard they taken in a kittypet too but he don't have the fire burning in his heart like you. After all you fought to join us, something we respect a lot. It also help that you didn't wear a collar. Anyway that all for now. thanks for listening to me. Come visit again some time. I be sure to have other tidbits of information later." Nightpelt let out a yawn as he got up. He purr as he saw them yawning as well.

They gave a nod before shuffling off to the apprentice den. Looking inside, he notice that only Gullpaw, Littlepaw, Mousepaw and Gingerpaw is asleep. The information he gotten roll around in his mind and he barely said goodnight to Turtlepaw before laying in his nest. There was so many different Clans and they seem so tough. Cats that can run faster than rabbits. Cats that can swim. And cats that hide in undergrowth. He never knew that the forest he look out had so much happening in them. He slowly fell asleep, hoping he can keep up in his new fast pace life.

Chapter 7

[image]

Nightpaw slowly woke up without anyone waking him up this time. That how he realize that slowly he is getting used to the clan life. He look around, seeing the other apprentices still sleeping. Seeing Brownpaw and Wetpaw, he wondered where they was last night. He pad out of the apprentices' den, blinking in the dawn light that shone down in the camp. He wonder what can he do when he saw Blackfoot leave the warrior's den.

"You are up early. That is what we like to see. You can join us on the dawn patrol. Get something to eat as I wake the others." Blackfoot meow as he went back inside.

Nightpaw saw that the prey pile was low so he chose a small mouse so that the elders and queens can get a better meal when they wake up. He finish it by the time Blackfoot walk back out, follow by Badgerfang, Whitethroat and Darkflower. He saw a flash of confusion when Badgerfang saw him. They quickly left, nodding to Ratscar who was on guard duty. Ratscar went to sleep since a patrol was out. They walk past the marsh and twolegplace that he saw before. Badgerfang whisper to him that Blackfoot was marking the border so they know not to come over here. Blackfoot look over at him, asking if he smell those rogues from before. Opening his mouth, he did but the scents was old. He told him and blackfoot smile, saying he was correct. His tail curl up as he realize he pass the small test.

They walk away from the twolegplace towards a tree that is farther in the territory. The tree is huge, looking like it been stuck by lightning.

"This is the burnt sycamore. This is where we learn how to hunt at night, learning how to climb trees without being seen and hiding in the shadows. We also learn how to walk silently." Badgerfang mew softly as they pass it by.

Darkflower shush them as Whitethroat notice a mouse. He caught it by slowly creeping up to it. Nightpaw ears stretch out when he realize that he couldn't hear Whitethroat's pawsteps. How do they move so quietly, he wonder to himself. Whitethroat bury it and they move on.

"So Nightpaw, how are you liking ShadowClan?" Darkflower slow down til she was next to him.

"The training is tough but rewarding. Never knew there was so many rules. Still don't understand most of it but I'm going to try my best. Why do you believe in Starclan? I don't understand that. The rest is because it is logical." Nightpaw whiskers twitch as he look over at her from the corner of his eyes.

"Of course you wouldn't understand, being a kittypet." Her mew wasn't harsh but full of understanding.

"Starclan watches over us and we do see proof because our leaders get nine lives."

"Nine lives? But that a tall tale that my mother told me when I was a kit. Even heard Twolegs say that." His eyes widen incredulously, hoping that she would say that she is pulling his leg. She shook her head in response.

"It's true. No one knows what goes on when a leader gets their lives. Maybe you will believe when you see it." Badgerfang injected as they walk.

"Are we on a border patrol or a walk? You guys chitter like elders. Hurry up." Whitethroat mew with a shake of his head. That when they realize that both Blackfoot and Whitethroat was waiting for them to catch up. They gave a small purr before running to catch up.

They walk through a belt of trees that wasn't just pines. His ears flick up when he heard a distant roaring sound. Soon they came upon a hard surface, which Badgerfang uses his tail to block Nightpaw from walking on it.

"Careful Nightpaw. This is the Thunderpath. Cats have died on it before due to the monsters." Before he finish speaking, another roaring sound came from the left.

Nightpaw shiver as the monster went passed, throwing up dirt from their round black paws. He let out a mew of alarm as the monster is big enough to crush a cat under them and it didn't seem to slow down either. He smelt a scent of burning stone that the monster had left behind.

"Oh look at the kittypet cowering before the monster." A jeering voice sounded from across the Thunderpath.

Looking across, he saw a pale brown tabby tom, a small black tom and a big dark brown tom watching them. His eyes narrow as Blackfoot stood in front of him. He smooth down his fur as he look at them.

"Longtail, Tigerclaw and Ravenpaw. Tigerclaw is mentor to Ravenpaw." Whitethroat mew softly to him.

"Hello Tigerclaw. How's the prey running?" Blackfoot mew as Whitethroat went to mark the border.

"Prey running well. Guessing that is the new apprentice? Scrawny little thing ain't he?" Tigerclaw's mew was deep and polite. He lick his left paw to clean his ear, showing off his claws.

Nightpaw saw those claws, and his eyes narrow. Clearly he was threatening them. Despite his friendly tone. He knows of cats in his past who did this to him during his escapes. He remembered a white fluffy tom who wasn't as nice as he look. He not going to fall for it again.

"Name is Nightpaw. I may be small now but that don't mean I won't grow." He mew while keeping his temper. His tail tip fur bristled despite his efforts. Badgerfang sat down next to him with a smirk. He is proving himself to the ThunderClan cats. He even ignore Longtail's comment, acting like he doesn't exist. It how he dealt with bullies in Twolegplace.

"Nice to meet you, Nightpaw." Ravenpaw voice shook a bit while he glance at his mentor.

"Nice to meet you too." Nightpaw reply with a kind mew. He like meeting other apprentices, wondering about their training. Though he knows he can't ask due to the way Tigerclaw is glaring at him. He look a bit confuse at the hatred coming out of Tigerclaw amber eyes. Maybe he got something against ShadowClan. He did notice the scars on Tigerclaw's nose and ear hoping it was one of his clanmates who did it.

Tigerclaw nod before leaving as Longtail finish marking their border. Blackfoot wait for a few minutes to make sure the Thunderclan patrol is gone. Without a word, Blackfoot walk until the Thunderclan border can no longer be seen. The ground fell away into a deep cleft that became a tunnel. Two sides are lined with squared off stones.

"This tunnel is a ShadowClan secret. ThunderClan don't know about this tunnel. It leds to the other side. This is also how we get to the gathering. If we don't go across the ThunderClan border, it is still ShadowClan land all the way to fourtrees." Blackfoot meow with a flick of his tail. Blackfoot led the way back into the forest. They walk a long way until Nightpaw realize he didn't see the twolegplace anymore. The twolegs den fade into trees as Blackfoot led them to another tunnel.

"This is the WindClan tunnel. Unlike ThunderClan, they do know about this tunnel. They often go through it to steal our prey. And we teach them a lesson every time. No one steals from us and get away with it.Tell me what do you smell?" Badgerfang mew as he pad next to him. Before he can answer,Blackfoot raise his tail to halt the patrol. There are clumps of long marshy grass nearby where they hid in. That when he heard pawsteps coming through the tunnel. Blackfoot tail lash as the WindClan cats came out the tunnel. They walk a few tail lengths before stopping.

"Careful Cloudrunner as I smell ShadowClan nearby." A brown mottled tom mew softly.

"As you should." Blackfoot jump out in front of them with a flick of

his tail. Badgerfang was behind them with Nightpaw next to him. Darkflower and Whitethroat was on their other side. Too late they saw that they was surrounded. Nightpaw glare as his claws was out, his fur bristling.

"Mudclaw, Cloudrunner. Why are you trespassing on ShadowClan territory?" Blackfoot's mew was harsh, his tail was lashing.

"We don't have to explain nothing to you." Mudclaw growls as he launch himself at Blackfoot.

Nightpaw let out a loud hiss as he leap at Cloudrunner with Badgerfang at his side. He did a front paw blow which Cloudrunner dodge, clawing his side. Badgerfang push him out the way before it hit, taking it himself. Pretty soon he saw Mudclaw being overrun by the others and letting out a shriek before running away. Badgerfang bit Cloudrunner paw before he too ran back into the tunnel. It was only thanks to Badgerfang that he didn't take any hits.

"Thing you need to know about WindClan is that they are quick to retreat." Darkflower purr as she lick the light scratches she got. He peer into the tunnel, seeing it was smaller than the other one. ShadowClan is so much stronger than the other clans. He purr as well as Blackfoot mark the border. Whitethroat went back to pick up the prey he caught as they lick their wounds clean.

"We need to report this to Brokenstar." Blackfoot mew as he lick his pelt clean of blood. They ran back to camp, going through the tunnel in such a rush that they nearly ran into another patrol that was leaving.

"Brokenstar. We found out who is stealing our prey." Blackfoot yowl as Brokenstar came out of his den. The other cats came out of their dens, surrounding the patrol. Soon he saw Runningnose coming towards them, checking them out. He took off the wrap around Nightpaw's ear, saying it doesn't need any more herbs. Nightpaw nod at him as he listen to Blackfoot's report.

After he finished, Brokenstar seem to be in deep thought. "I want eyes on that border. If you see any WindClan cats, just follow them. See what they do. Also want eyes on their camp. Flintfang, I want

you to lead one patrol at night. Ratscar and Mintshade will be with you. The rest will be lookouts in shifts. We still need hunting patrols.I would lead one. Dismiss." Brokenstar had a clever glint in his orange eyes as he took Blossomsky, Volewhisper, and Tallpoppy. The patrol who was going out decide to wait until Blackfoot assign who going to be lookout.

"Yellowfang, and Tangleburr. You two will hide in the grass near the tunnel. I want all mentors to teach the apprentices the quiet step. Seems we going to need to speed up their training. Newtspeck, take your patrol towards the Carrionplace. Need to make sure to thin the rats so they won't be a future problem." Blackfoot gave a nod as the rest of the camp starts the day. He overheard mumblings of if it wasn't for WindClan, they would still be asleep. He also sent out two more hunting patrols since the prey pile only had enough for elders and queens.

He saw Blackfoot grabbing some prey to give to the elders. He didn't know the deputy also does apprentice duties. He asks Badgerfang what he should be doing.

"Wake up Gullpaw, Turtlepaw, Mousepaw and Gingerpaw. Littlepaw, Wetpaw and Brownpaw been training late into night so they need their sleep." Badgerfang told him while Runningnose start to put cobwebs on his cuts. He already finished with Darkflower and Whitethroat. He barely got scratch due to Badgerfang covering him so he was all set. He went into the den, prodding Gullpaw with a paw since she was close to the entrance.

"Gullpaw. Get up. Need to train." He mew softly, trying not to wake Littlepaw was close to her.

After seeing her open her eyes, he then went to wake Gingerpaw. Due to his mews from waking Gullpaw, he saw that Mousepaw is already awake. Gingerpaw let out a yawn as her eyes open. He had to pad carefully so he didn't step on Wetpaw's tail. Turtlepaw let out a small snore as he reach her. He gave her a bonk to wake her, expecting her to be as hard to wake as her sister. She quickly got up, hissing as she thought she was under attack.

"Sorry but we got training." Nightpaw whisper as he lead the way

outside. The others was cleaning themselves as Badgerfang is explaining on what they have to do. One of the hunting patrols came back while he was explaining so everyone but Nightpaw grab something to eat.

"Nightpaw, would you like to share this blackbird?" Gullpaw asks. She was sharing with Turtlepaw and saw he didn't grab anything. He shook his head since he ate earlier. Soon Brokenstar came back with a lot of prey, placing it down he nods at his patrol before grabbing Blackfoot to talk to him. The rest of the patrol went to the warrior den to sleep.

Nightpaw try creeping to listen in when Gingerpaw step on his tail to stop him.

"Wouldn't do that if I was you. Never thought you be the nosy type. Besides it just boring clan stuff. Anyway tell us what happened on your patrol." She mew as she let him go.

He saw the others looking at him with interest in their eyes. He felt hot under his fur due to being the center of attention. Is this what my brother feels like, he thought, remembering how popular Charlie is.

"Nothing much happened until we got to the ThunderClan border. The Thunderpath is very scary and loud. We met a ThunderClan patrol. Longtail, Tigerclaw and Ravenpaw." His claws slid out as he remember Longtail's jeer. The others glance at each other as they noticed this. Shaking his head, he continued. "Anyway Blackfoot and Tigerclaw was polite to each other. Is Ravenpaw a warrior's apprentice? He didn't act like it. Never saw an apprentice look so scared before. Anyway since nothing happened there, we went to the WindClan border. Mudclaw came through the tunnel with Cloudrunner and we ambushed them. Badgerfang push me aside and fought with Cloudrunner while Blackfoot took on Mudclaw with Darkflower. Whitethroat also helped with Cloudrunner and fight was over due to us outnumbering them. They ran back home."

"So that why everyone is up so early." mew Mousepaw as they finish eating.

Applefur lead them to the burnt sycamore. The other mentors was besides them. Applefur stop in front of it, telling them to try their best to walk softly without stepping on the sticks or making any noise.The other mentors climb the tree to claw some bark and sticks from it. They litter the ground and the mentors begin to put them in strategic places. They went off to the other side and call an apprentice name. Gullpaw was first. She had to get to the mentors who was waiting a fox length away. Gullpaw step on a bunch of them at first until she was halfway. She then use her tail to move some sticks but it still made noise. She wince as she wasn't expecting it to make noise when she reach the end. Nightpaw was next. He look over at the place, knowing it was worst because Gullpaw move some and broke some sticks apart. He carefully jump towards the tree as he saw a spot that was clear due to Gullpaw. Ok so now he needs to find another place to leap. If he step anywhere, he going to make noise. But he couldn't just stay here. That when an idea hit him. He glance up at the tree, noticing where the bark wouldn't fall away due to his climbing. He jump as high as he can into the tree, making sure he got a strong grip. They never said he couldn't climb the tree. He got on the first branch and noticed that the mentors eyes was wide. Always think outside the box. It how he survive his months in the house. Whenever the kits thought they had him, he always manage to outsmart them in some way. He jump down as far as he could but his back paw hit one before he manage to land clear. He let out a hiss of frustration.

"Well that was something I didn't expect. Nearly did good but you completely fail. The trial was to walk. Not climb. Now you will be going again but last." Fernshade said with a shake of her head.

He knew better than to argue so he just lash his tail. Badgerfang lay his tail on his shoulder but he shrug it off. He don't want pity right now. He watch Gingerpaw do it next. Since they saw him fail, the others knew not to do what he did. Gingerpaw was more patient than Gullpaw so she didn't step on as many as she did. She also didn't move any with her tail since they saw that also made noise. Her tail curl up since she knew she did the best she could. She sat on the other side of Gullpaw. Gullpaw congrat her as Nightpaw just let out a grunt as he went back to the other side by walking around the practice area. Mousepaw, like her name implied, took many

small steps in order to not make noise. She took longer than the other two but she breathe a sigh of relief when she made it. Turtlepaw gave a small encouraging nod to Nightpaw before she started. She got into her stalking pose. Nightpaw's eyes flash as he remember that stalking was the answer. They rarely make noise because they don't want to scare off the prey. He watch as she slid around the bark pieces and sticks. Her paws made small movement so she didn't have to put her whole weight on them. But she is also impatient and ran the last few tail lengths. She would have pass if she kept her patience. Or maybe it was because of her nerves failing. He did notice her movements was shaky as she continue.

Looking across, he now see why being last is the worst place to be. The area was more messy due to everyone else crossing it and the small clearing he had before is gone. He doesn't have to be perfect. He just need to try. No shame in failing. These thoughts ran through his head as he close his eyes to calm down. He can feel his fur burning as the others is staring at him. Opening his eyes, he also got into his stalking pose. He did remember the snake like movement Runningnose did in the fight and try his best to copy it. He didn't jump but narrow his eyes to see small spots he can put his paws. He is smaller than the others and hope he can use his small size as an advantage. He slowly padded forward, having his whiskers constantly twitching to see where to go next. He wince as he step on a bark piece but kept his patience unlike Turtlepaw. He slowly lift one paw and was about to put it down when he notice the wind was blowing. That clear some space up so he knew it is pure luck as he finish. He did better than Turtlepaw but only because he saw everyone else trying first and it was much harder.

"Nice try everyone. Did you get the feeling of moving silently? I want you to remember that feeling since it is important. As you saw, Nightpaw fail as he didn't count his claws making noise into the tree. Everyone would have saw and heard him climbing. Turtlepaw nearly had it. Surprise no one else thought of the stalking pose but that is why this is a training exercise. You are here to learn. To move silently, get into a stalking pose. Be aware of everything. Branches, sticks, and the wind. If you find your way block, try another way.-" Mossclaw was demonstrating as he move perfectly between the sticks and bark. "Also remember to keep your

weight in mind." He went low and slid across the ground, his fur muffling the sound of the sticks and bark. In the grass, he would be completely silent.

The apprentices eyes widen as they all got into their stalking poses. Each mentor correct them when they made a mistake. They spent the day learning how to move. Soon they each went across, improving how they did it before. They asks questions and got answers on improving even more. Soon their mentors told them to always practice, even when hunting. They told them to go hunt some lizards and frogs since they are hard to sneak up on. Mousepaw and Gullpaw went towards the marsh while Gingerpaw went on her own. Turtlepaw also left on her own. Their mentors went with them. The marsh is huge so Nightpaw went to the other side and hid behind a tree that was close to it. Peeking his head out, he saw a big one leaping towards a fallen log. Remembering his lessons, he crept close to it. Before the frog notice him, he jump on it with his claws out. He grab a leg since it was hard to carry otherwise due to the frog skin. He is getting used to living here. His ear twitch as he heard Badgerfang coming towards him.

"Nice catch. You are learning well." He said with a purr as they walk together.

"I have a great mentor." He reply out the side of his mouth.

"I notice that you are getting more patient. Need to get over your fear but that will come in due time. There's no rush." Badgerfang look at him out of the corner of his eyes. Nightpaw's can feel his anger rising beneath his fur. He flick an ear before s he purr as he saw his friends also had frogs and lizards.

"Well done. Time to go back to camp. You all work hard today. Spend the rest of the day resting after taking care of the bedding. We will teach you about hunting at night." Hopeheart mew with a swish of her tail.

After they put their prey on the pile, they each took a corner of the camp to clean the bedding. Turtlepaw, Gingerpaw and Mousepaw took the apprentice den and warriors' den. Nightpaw went to the nursery, asking Brightflower if he can replace her bedding. She gave

a nod as she went to strike up a conversation with hopeheart. Nightpaw's ear turn to listen in.

"So do you got any eyes on a mate? I know Russetfur and Deerfoot are spending time together. Same with Scorchwind and Darkflower. But you spend time with everyone." Brightflower is licking her paw to clean her ears.

"I'm just not interested right now. Besides you know the deal. Someone has to win in a fight against me." Hopeheart smirk as she curl her tail around her paws.

"No one won yet? Thought Badgerfang came close?"

"Badgerfang just kept challenging me. He is on his seventh fight. It is adorable actually."

"Heard him talking about it too. Others had quit but not him." Brightflower look over at the subject in question. He was curl on a stump near the elders den, The sun is shining on it, making it a perfect nap spot. The elders was all heading outside the camp, saying they was going for a walk together.

"Maybe I should let him win." Hopeheart murmur to herself as Nightpaw finish replacing the nest.

"Your nest is ready, Brightflower." He said as he went to get rid of the dirty moss outside the camp. Brightflower thank him as he went to do the elders. Hopeheart went to the warrior's den since they was finished.

After they finish, the apprentices all sat down, and share tongues. The camp is somewhat empty due to the patrols being out and Nightpaw enjoy the peace and quiet. Nightpaw told them that he is going to see if Runningnose need any help. He want to do something and feel useless if he not doing anything. Looking around, he saw Runningnose putting herbs outside to count. He don't know why he getting antsy but maybe it because he not used to peace.

"Hey Runningnose. Do you need any help? I'm not busy." Nightpaw

said as he ran up to him.

"Sure. Just grab some herbs inside and bring them out here. Need to check if I need to go collect any." Runningnose was putting the herbs in separate piles. Nightpaw gave a nod as he went in the medicine den. He grab a leaf wrap that had seeds in it. He put it outside.

"So want to tell me why you feel like helping? I'm glad for the help but I'm guessing you are here with purpose." Runningnose asks as he watch Nightpaw going back and forth til all herbs is out.

"It just too peaceful. I'm not used to peace. Besides I need to do something otherwise I don't feel right. I got friends but just don't feel comfortable around them yet." Nightpaw sigh as he help putting all the herbs in a pile.

"Try to relax. You are safe here. I'm sure your friends will understand too." Runningnose said as he paw the herbs. "Seem I'm running low on burdock roots. Those are needed for rat bites. Thanks for the help Nightpaw. Now go connect with your friends." Runningnose said as he start putting the herbs away.

Nightpaw felt better after talking to Runningnose and gave a smile. Felt like a weight lift off of his shoulders as he went back. His tail swish as he sat next to Mousepaw.

"Hey do you guys want to practice fighting moves? I only know two but I want to be better." Nightpaw asks as he look at the others.

"Sure. I want to see how fast I dodge." Gullpaw mew as she got up and stretch.

"I want to see how fast I can attack." Turtlepaw said.

"I'm going to sleep. We need to rest for night training." Mousepaw said as she look over at Gingerpaw.

"I'm going to join you guys. That way it be two vs two." Gingerpaw mew while Mousepaw look a bit miffed that her sister wasn't joining her. Mousepaw went to the den while the others went to close to the elders' den since there a small space to practice.

Gingerpaw and Gullpaw begin to practice with dodging, while Nightpaw wait for Turtlepaw to attack him.

"I'm not going to go easy on you." Turtlepaw's eyes narrow as she rush at him. Nightpaw's tail wave excitedly as he wait to jump at the last second. Turtlepaw growl as she try again. With Nightpaw back facing her, he did a back kick which hit her hard. After hearing her landing, he knew he hit too hard.

"Turtlepaw! Are you ok? I'm sorry. I really should hold back." Nightpaw ran to her, sniffing her over to make sure there no blood.

"I'm fine." Her fur is bristling as she stood back up. They saw the others looking at them with concern but she wave her tail to let them know she is fine. Nightpaw went back to his place before facing her again. Turtlepaw didn't wait to attack as she rush at him again. But when Nightpaw dodge, she manage to throw a paw to hit his side.

"Nice one." Nightpaw said as he wince. Her paw strike was good. They fought some more until they all was tired. They saw patrols coming back in as they practice. Swampcloud was giving advice while they fought. Mostly on Turtlepaw side. They decided to go for a nap since the sun was going down and they did need energy for tonight. Nightpaw fell fast asleep as the others stay up to talk for a few minutes, going over their fighting techniques.

Chapter 8

[image]

Nightpaw quickly woke up when he felt a hard bop on his head. He look up into Turtlepaw's smug face.

"Not so nice to be woken up like that right?" Turtlepaw mew. There is a mischievous glint in her blue eyes as she lick a paw. He can only growl, knowing he deserved it for doing the same thing to her earlier. She left the den as he begin to clean himself before leaving. Blinking his eyes, he purr as he felt the cool night air. Looking up, he saw it was moonhigh and the camp is relaxing. Brokenstar was chatting with yellowfang and scorchwind, Badgerfang was whispering to Hopeheart with his tail on her shoulder. Blackfoot was sharing tongues with Hollyflower and that when he noticed that they kinda look alike in their body shape. Turtlepaw prod his side to get his attention.

"Here you go. Gullpaw and Mousepaw is already out with Fernshade and Applefur." She mew as she drop a blackbird in front of him. She had a lizard in front of herself, begin to eat as he look to see where Gingerpaw was. He saw her with Runningnose, talking to him as she deliver some prey to him. Russetfur, Deerfoot and Tangleburr went to eat with him as Gingerpaw join them.

"Hey Gingerpaw, are you excited for tonight?" Turtlepaw asks as she was finished. Nightpaw took his time as he is busy observing the camp with one ear turn towards the conversation.

"Of Course. Love learning about the differences between day and night hunting. While the other clans sleep at night, we get to explore and see things they never know about. Like how quiet owls are. At least that what Ratscar told me." She mew as she start to clean herself.

"Nightpaw? Are you paying attention? Hello?" Turtlepaw walk towards him as he was busy eating. He place his tail against her mouth when she was close enough.

"You can learn a lot if you observe. Yes I'm excited as well. Besides Night hunting should be more interesting since we can't see without the moonlight. How do we sneak up on prey if they can smell us coming? The wind is cooler than the day and doesn't blow as much." Nightpaw wonder as he move his tail.

"Very good observation Nightpaw. Maybe you got some sense in that kittypet head of yours." Swampcloud was walking by. He sat down by them. His neck fur bristle as he finish his meal. He was going to open his mouth to respond but Gingerpaw was faster.

"Swampcloud, he been with us for close to three days. His kittypet scent had faded by now. He was ready to die by rogues. Besides you know there are half kittypets around so knock it off! Stop being a mousebrain because it is getting tiring." She was nose to nose with him, her tail lashing.

Swampcloud look taken aback by Gingerpaw defensiveness. He look and saw Turtlepaw glaring at him as well. He watch as Nightpaw stood with Gingerpaw.

"I'm not going to apologize for where I was born. No cat can help with where they are born. I will do everything to prove to you and everyone that I'm not going anywhere. I will become a warrior that you would be proud of calling your clanmate." Nightpaw hiss softly so only they can hear it.

"I would be watching and waiting for you to run once it gets too tough. Bet you be leaving once leafbare starts. Sure it easy to say that when the prey is running." Swampcloud gave a smirk as he walk off.

"Can't believe I'm related to him." Gingerpaw huff as she sat down. Both Nightpaw and Turtlepaw stare at her. Noticing this, she told them that Dawncloud had another mate before Ratscar but he died against rats in the Carrionplace. It also how Ratscar got his scar and patchy tail. She only knows because as a kit, she overheard them talking about it when they thought she was sleeping. So they share the same mother and at least Blossomsky is nicer.

"At least you know your parents. I was lucky to run across Charlie

and that was only because he lived around the corner. This clan is a big family and I see that now." Nightpaw's mew is bitter as he went to get rid of the bones of his meal. Badgerfang came towards them, telling them it was time as Nightpaw return.

They walk through the thorn tunnel, seeing Flintfang's patrol ahead of them. Soon they stop at the marsh as Flintfang's patrol continue to WindClan tunnel.

"As you can tell, it's going to be harder to hunt at night. Can anyone tell me why that is?" Badgerfang mew as an owl hooted.

"Because we aren't the only ones hunting? Don't owls eat mice too? Also foxes and badgers are night creatures as well. " Nightpaw asks as he glance at the others.

"The wind barely blows at night compare to day. Also it is dark." Turtlepaw said as she notice this with her whiskers twitching.

"There not enough prey that is awake at night too. Aren't they all sleeping?" Gingerpaw mew with a shrug.

"All correct. So now I'm going to show you a ShadowClan secret." Badgerfang went towards the marsh water and duck until it cover him to his shoulders. Nightpaw frown as he realize he could only smell the marsh now.

"Disguising our scents works wonders during night hunts. As you can scent, you can no longer smell Badgerfang. Now all of you do the same." Hopeheart mew. Her whiskers twitch in amusement as she saw the expressions on the apprentices.

Nightpaw can feel the muck touch his belly as he walk deeper until he is covered. Looking at Gingerpaw, he saw she had a look of disgust on her face. Same with Turtlepaw on his other side. He was still scared of getting stuck but he went to the shallow end. After getting out, he was not looking forward to cleaning himself.

"Now remember to keep your senses alert as you hunt. Try your best." Mossclaw mew as they begin to go hunt. Turtlepaw ran towards the ThunderClan border with Mossclaw.

"Bet you I get way more prey than you!" She shouted as she ran.

She won't be catching anything with how much noise she is making. He thought to himself as he open his mouth to catch a scent. The wind was barely blowing and with everyone all muddy, he couldn't scent anything. Maybe I need to go to the burnt sycamore. As he begin to pad away, he felt a paw prodding him.

"Want to hunt together? Since it be easier with two?" Gingerpaw asks when he look at her. He look over at Badgerfang and he told them they never said that they have to be alone.

"Sure. You know any good hunting spots? Was thinking the burnt sycamore but not sure. Maybe the Carrionplace but heard there was rats there and it is dangerous." Nightpaw mew as she begin to lead the way.

"The marsh is the hardest since frogs and lizards won't be out. Maybe we can scent something far from the marsh. With Turtlepaw at the ThunderClan border, we can go to WindClan tunnel. Or near it since there are cats switching out with the guards. Twolegplace is good too cuz Kittypets won't be out at night." Gingerpaw said as Nightpaw walk by her side.

Soon they smelt a mouse hiding in the grass, With a flick of her tail, she told him to circle around to block its escape. The mouse had no idea cuz of their disguises, thought Nightpaw as they crept up using the quiet step they learnt earlier. Soon Gingerpaw launch herself forward but an owl managed to grab her in midair.

"Gingerpaw!" Nightpaw yell as they ran after the owl. Hopeheart launch herself in the air but fell short. Gingerpaw let out a wail as the owl's claws held her tighter, flying up slowly due to the weight. Badgerfang launch himself and managed to grab her front paws. The owl lower itself more due to the increase of weight.

"Nightpaw aim for the wings." Hopeheart hiss as she jump for the body. Nightpaw nodded as he jump on one wing. With their combined weight, the owl fell to the ground. Nightpaw aim a bite to one wing while Badgerfang managed to claw the face. Hopeheart did a killing bite and soon the talon release Gingerpaw. There was

holes where the claws dug into her flanks and she was breathing hard. Blood was pooling under her body. Hopeheart put her on her back as they ran to camp.

"Runningnose!" Badgerfang call out as they came through the tunnel. Dawncloud let out a wail as she saw the state of her daughter. She rush to her side, licking her when Runningnose came up and told them to put her in the medicine den. He kick Dawncloud out so he can focus on saving her. Dawncloud was pacing back and forth. Even hissing at Swampcloud when he tried to led her away. Swampcloud just sat nearby while she continuing pacing.

Please be okay. Was so stupid. Of course owls will be up at night. I even said it. Nightpaw thought to himself, feeling guilt as he wait close to the medicine den. He should have been looking up. Time seem to move slow until Runningnose came out.

"She made it but she won't be doing anything until those wounds heal. I give her at least a moon." Runningnose nod at Dawncloud as she rush inside. Nightpaw watch as both Blossomsky and Swampcloud went inside as well. A prick was felt in his heart as he watch her family gathered.

The camp mood was somber as he left. He first went to a stream to wash the muck off of him. He made sure no one saw him leave as he went back to the owl's body. With a loud growl, he attack the body, clawing until there was nothing left. This is all your fault! Everything was going fine until you had to mess everything up! was all that is playing in his head. He didn't know how long he was out there but he was breathing heavily as his rage left him feeling worn out.

"Feeling better?" A deep voice mew as he froze. Looking behind him, he saw Brokenstar watching him with his tail curl around his paws. He peer into his eyes, looking for some judgement but there was none.

"I...yes." was all Nightpaw can get out as he look at the ground. There was nothing he can say and it was made clear Brokenstar already knew why he is here.

"You have the same anger I had in my youth." The sun was slowly peeking out from the horizon as Brokenstar spoke.

"What do I do?" Nightpaw mew softly as he look at him. Brokenstar walk until he sat next to him.

"Channel it for the good of the clan. That rage can be a good thing but it also can lead you down a path of darkness. I should know for I step on that line. And it was very hard to hold back. My father died due to a WindClan patrol. Next time I saw that cat, I had him under my claws." At this Brokenstar swipe his paw with his claws extended. Nightpaw eyes widen as he saw how long those claws was.

"I didn't care for the code and all I can hear was my father's voice telling me to do it. But I didn't. It was the hardest thing to let him go." Brokenstar mew is soft.

"Did you regret it? If you don't mind me asking?" Nightpaw's glance at him, seeing the memories swimming in his orange eyes. Brokenstar was watching the sun rise.

"Do you regret lashing at the owl's body?" He asks with an ear twitch. "Even now I wondered. You should wash that blood off and get some sleep." Brokenstar's mew was brisk and Nightpaw realize that was the cat under the mask. He push his nose into Brokenstar's side for a second to let him know that he won't ever tell anyone about this. He gave a small smile in return as Nightpaw pad slowly back to the camp. At least he now knows he isn't the only one with anger issues. He look back, seeing Brokenstar's silhouette against the sky.

Chapter 9

[image]

He hear the mouse heart beat in his ear fur as he slowly crept from the bramble bush. He tense his muscles to pounce, jumping only when he was close enough. He threw the mouse in the air to stun it before giving it the killing bite. Gingerpaw's favorite prey is mouse so he want to get it for her. It been two moons since the owl attack yet she was still afraid of the night. He don't blame her either as it must be hard healing after the attack. Runningnose made her do stretches and walk around the camp for healing. There is still signs of where the claws held her. All the apprentices visit her but he visit her the most due to his guilt. Even though Dawncloud told him it wasn't his fault. His ears prick as he heard a bird caw from above. He purr as his senses been awakened to the wild since he joined Shadowclan.

After burying the fresh kill under the leaves, his ears prick as he heard a monster on the Thunderpath. As the wind blew, he shiver as the wind is brisk. He can imagine Swampcloud smug face as the days go by. He is not going to let him think he will quit just because it gets cold and hard to find food. He was hunting on his own as Badgerfang want to see how well he does by himself. He has until sundown but he already caught two fresh kill. He can relax for a bit. He went to the marsh first to grab a toad, and now he got the mouse. The sun is shining down on a patch of grass so he decided to lie on it, purring at the warmth on his belly. He was close to the Thunderpath behind a bush. His ears prick as he heard pawsteps coming towards him. He quickly roll as a grunt sounded.

"Got to be faster than that, Brownpaw!" He gloat as he tussle with him, getting a few good paw swipes in. Brownpaw kick him off before launching at him again.

" Bet no one can call you a soft kittypet now! Those strikes hurt. Bet they would hurt more with your claws out. Would hate to be your enemy." Brownpaw purr as he gave some paw strikes of his own.

Nightpaw purr as they separate, cleaning the dirt from their pelts. Brownpaw may be older but he just can't get the quiet steps down. It why he could hear him coming.

"So why are you here? Were you searching for me?" Nightpaw asks as he wait for an answer.

"Well you remember how we found out WindClan had visitors which is why they was stealing prey? Stumpytail told me to go tell Blackfoot that we found a badger walking towards the burnt sycamore due to them chasing it towards us. We actually watch them do it too. Seems they think our territory is for their waste." He snarl as his tail lash. "Stumpytail is waiting for back up so I got to go!" Brownpaw ran off towards the camp.

That Brownpaw is so forgetful. He thought to himself as he lay back down, peering through the bush that lined the Thunderpath. He can see the Thunderclan border on the other side clearly.

His eyes widen as he saw a ginger tom step out from the other side. What was that mouse brain doing? He quickly got up, stepping closer to the bush as the tom put a paw on the thunderpath and heard a loud meow yelling Firepaw before a monster came through. Did he lose his paw? He close his eyes to guard against the fierce wind that the monster brought up. Opening them, he strain all senses to the other side. He sigh in relief as he saw the ginger tom whole and alive on the other side. They met each other eyes and stare at each other for a few minutes. He blink slowly before seeing Firepaw run back into the forest. That was Firepaw? The one who was also a kittypet who joined a clan.

He look around to make sure no one saw him as he quickly ran across. He did want to talk to Firepaw since they were both outsiders. Sure he was accepted by most of his clan and they seem to like him. It just mostly Swampcloud that seem to have an issue with him. He like to act like nothing affects him but Swampcloud's taunts do get to him. Deep down he does feel like what Swampcloud say does make sense. Every time it snowed, he never went out due to how cold it is. He was only lock out once but remember how cold he was when he realize the door was close and there was no way back inside. Now he is being watched as the

seasons pass, wondering if he was going to run away once it snowed. As he cross the border, he roll in the Thunderclan scent markers to mask his scent. He quickly ran into the undergrowth, hissing softly when he felt the thorns in his fur. How do these Thunderclan cats ever move around when there was so many bushes and stuff to get tangled in? Already he was missing his territory as he open his mouth to scent Firepaw. He stop moving as he heard warriors coming towards the border, closing his eyes to hide. These cats are loud, how exactly do they sneak up on prey? He wonder as he keep completely still.

"You know what to do, Darkstripe." A familiar mew sounded as he crouch there. Tigerclaw sounded calm.

"Of course Tigerclaw. Be back before the kittypet does." Darkstripe spit out the word kittypet as if it was mouse bile. They both separate and Nightpaw waited until there was no more noise before leaving his hiding spot. Guess he going to interrupt Firepaw's training. He uses all his skill to follow Firepaw before any more cats come towards the border. He purr to himself as he realize that he was great at the shadow steps. Seems his training is paying off as he ran from bush to bush. Soon he could see Firepaw hunting some prey, waiting for him to get the kill. His eyes narrow as he saw Firepaw in a crouch before jumping and killing the mouse. What was that move? Shaking his head, he let out a hiss to get his attention. He felt proud as he walk around, keeping himself hidden in Firepaw's own forest.

"Firepaw. Just want to talk. Sheathe your claws." Nightpaw whisper as he walk around when he saw Firepaw's fur bristling.

"Who are you?!" Firepaw hisses as he look around, not seeing anyone. He open his mouth but he can only scent Thunderclan and the undergrowth.

"Mean no harm. To prove this, Tigerclaw seem to be planning a test for you. Darkstripe is helping him. Let meet at the gathering as we have a lot in common." Nightpaw quickly ran back to the Thunderpath.

Before he left, he heard other pawsteps so knew he was about to get

caught. He look both ways before quickly running across, hoping that no one saw him. He landed on the other side before the monster came down the road. He knew the monster would further hide his scent as he went to a stream to wash the Thunderclan scent from his pelt.

"So how was Thunderclan?" A small whisper sounded as he got out the stream, shaking the water from his pelt. Looking around, he saw Turtlepaw watching him calmly with her tail wrap around her paws. His ears flatten as he saw her curious expression.

"Don't worry. We are alone. All I saw was you running across the thunderpath. Was hunting near the border when I saw you run like dogs was chasing you. Why were you over there? I won't tell anyone." She mew as he sat in front of her.

He stare at her, noticing the soft fur framing her face. He can see the depths of friendship in her eyes as they spent the past two moons training together. He begin to shuffle his paws before speaking, hoping she can see his point.

"Well it was because I wanted to see Firepaw. The only other kittypet that was accepted into a clan and becoming a warrior. You won't understand because you are clanborn." Nightpaw mew bitterly as he look away.

"I thought you would know me better than that. Come on, I understand perfectly." Turtlepaw scoff as he look back at her. She poke him with her paw before smiling at him.

"You did say Shadowclan is like a family. Something in your tone told me you was unhappy with that fact. You aren't as mysterious as you like to believe. Sure the ones who don't know you well won't get you, but I been paying attention. You are lonely. I get lonely too. Even with my family around." She shrugged.

"If you tell anyone what I said, you be sore next training session." Nightpaw don't know how she manage to get him out of his own head.

"Who said you will win?" He narrow his eyes before bowling her

over, pinning her quickly. He gave a smug expression as she couldn't move him.

"You are too heavy. Maybe lay off the frogs." She grunt as she try to shove him off. Suddenly he heard Gullpaw calling for Turtlepaw. She quickly ran towards them, her eyes widening as she took in the scene before her.

"Now I see why you want to hunt alone." Gullpaw tease as she watch them quickly separate.

"Here I thought something was wrong since you rarely want to hunt alone. Now I see." Gullpaw tail was curled up in amusement as they start to sputter that it wasn't what she thought.

Nightpaw gave a small cough as he felt his fur heat up. Turtlepaw is just a good friend.

"I need to do some more hunting. See you both around." He empathize the both as he walk quickly away. He was far away before he saw a bird. Got a mouse, toad so now a bird. The bird was busy with a worm as he crept up. He quickly launch himself on the bird, giving it a quick killing bite before he look up due to hearing voices. He walk around a tree before seeing Gingerpaw with Blossomsky.

"Are you sure there no owls around here?" Gingerpaw mew as she anxiously look up.

"It is daytime. You can relax. Come on, let's go walk. You can't stay cooped up in the medicine den." Blossomsky mew softly while brushing her fur against Gingerpaw to relax her.

Nightpaw didn't want to interrupt them so left without making himself known. At least Gingerpaw was outside. He grab his bird as he went to get the other prey that he killed. Looking up, he saw it was midday so he decided to head back to camp. He saw Gullpaw and Turtlepaw with no prey ahead of him. He raise his tail in greeting before waiting for them to go through the tunnel first.

"Well done Nightpaw. Next head to the elders and take care of

them. After that you can eat and rest." Hopeheart said with a nod.

He twitch his ears to let her know he heard before heading to the prey pile. He drop them as he heard Hopeheart send Turtlepaw to clean the warriors den while Gullpaw help with the elders. Oh no, he thought to himself while heading to the elders den.

Peeking his head in the den, he saw the elders resting. Gullpaw is next to him, giving him a knowing smile. He did his best to ignore her.

"Hey Nightpaw, Gullpaw. Need fresh bedding and a mouse." Ashfur mew as he look up.

"Tell Runningnose my joints are acting up and could use some medicine and poppy seeds." Archeye groan as he stretch one limb.

"Got it. Will tell Runningnose right now." Nightpaw mew as he watch Gullpaw coming back with moss. Guess she left when Ashfur spoke. He was about to go when he heard yowls as warriors stream in, many of them bleeding with fur torn off.

At the scent of blood, Runningnose ran out with cobwebs around one paw. Stumpytail limp in, with Blackfoot on his back. Slowly letting him down, He move aside so Runningnose can work. Brokenstar came into the camp last, Nightpaw let out an alarmed mew as he saw that he was holding Brownpaw by his scruff. Nightpaw watch him closely, letting out a small sigh of relief when there is signs that he is still alive. Brokenstar put him down as Runningnose rush to him, checking him over.

"Gullpaw, get me more cobwebs! Warriors, clean your wounds if you can!" Runningnose said as he begin to separate the warriors into urgent and not urgent care. When he went to Brokenstar, he was met with a hiss to take care of the clan first. The other warriors left to get moss and more cobwebs. Nightpaw went to Newtspeck as Gullpaw gave him cobwebs. He press hard on the bleeding wounds, hoping he was doing it right. After all he watch Runningnose do the same to others in the past. He look around, nodding at the other apprentices who was doing the same as he was. Littlepaw was with Stumpytail, Gullpaw was passing cobwebs around, and Turtlepaw

was helping Yellowfang. Mousepaw is helping Clawface while Wetpaw was out with the others getting more cobwebs. This is what it meant to be in a clan. Runningnose was focused on Brownpaw as he seem the weakest. Brokenstar was bleeding into the ground but kept refusing help until he saw that everyone was being taken care of.

"Badger. Took us by surprise but Stumpytail patrol came and we managed to chase it away. Brownpaw took a claw attack as he rush in to save Newtspeck. Brave fool. Anyway I had to save him." Brokenstar meow as he fell unconscious. Yellowfang yowl and push Turtlepaw away to get to Brokenstar side. He remembered that Brokenstar is Yellowfang's kit. He mew in alarm, seeing his strong leader was down. She was mewing softly to him, like he was a kit and he guess to her, he still is.

"Nightpaw. Need you to go to Thunderclan and ask Spottedleaf for some chervil roots and marigold. Hurry!" Runningnose rush to Brokenstar, revealing the long gash in his side. Runningnose start pressing down hard on the wound as Gullpaw join in. Looking around, he realize how much was riding on him to get to their rival clan. The rest of the warriors who wasn't in the patrol or out collecting cobwebs was putting moss around each injured cat, making them more comfortable since they can't be moved. He quickly ran through the thorn tunnel, seeing the others coming back with a lot of cobwebs. Must be really bad if we need another clan help, he thought to himself as he ran as fast as he could.

Breathing hard, he made it to the thunderpath, growling in frustrations as there is no breaks between monsters. Looking across the Thunderpath, he saw a tabby tom with a patrol, marking the border. He frantically wave his tail to get their attention, knowing they wouldn't be able to hear with the monsters. There was a white tom and a pale ginger molly who saw him and padded forward close to the border.

"What do you want Shadowclan cat! Cross this border and I will lined my nest with your fur!" snarl the ginger, narrowing her eyes.

"Enough Sandpaw. Look at him. Does he look like he want to cause trouble? Look at his body language. You can tell a lot without the

cat having said a word. He got our attention so what do you think he wants?" The white tom stare down at Sandpaw, until she gave a huff.

"He wants help, Whitestorm." She mew as she stop her aggressive pose. She still glare at him as Whitestorm allow him to cross so they can hear his request.

"Runningnose sent me. I need Spottedleaf. Need chervil roots and marigold." He knead the ground as he look back towards his territory. Please hold on Brownpaw. He overheard Whitestorm sending Runningwind to get her as they walk deeper into the forest. They stop, sitting down as if he wasn't in a hurry. He begin to pace back and forth, his tail tip twitching anxiously.

"Calm down. Spottedleaf will get here soon. What's your name?" Whitestorm asks as he sat down, wrapping his tail around his paws.

"Nightpaw." He mew as he close his eyes. Don't do anything to anger the clan that is helping. He open his eyes when he calm down like Whitestorm said.

"Is it true that you're a kittypet?" Sandpaw asks. Looking at her, he wonders what she wants to know since her expression was smug.

"Yes. Whatever you think of saying, save it. I already heard it. Is it true that Thunderclan cats are rude and as arrogant as you?" He hiss before he can stop himself. So much for not angering the clan that is helping. Her tone rub his fur the wrong way.

He wince as he saw her eyes narrow. "Are all Shadowclan cats are mouse brain like you?" She hiss back.

"Enough you two. Spottedleaf! Over here!" Whitestorm wave his tail when a dark tortoiseshell and white molly arrive holding a leaf wrap. She put it down before speaking.

"Here you go. I include dock leaves as well as the herbs you said. Tell Runningnose he can send for more if he needs it." Her mew was soft, like listening to a mother soothing a kit. At least medicine didn't care that he was a kittypet or from another clan.

He thank her before picking up the leaf wrap. Nodding to the Thunderclan cats, he ran as fast as he could back to the Thunderpath. It was quiet so he went back to the camp without any issues. Swampcloud was outside, waiting for him. Now wasn't the time for animosity so he only gave a wave of his tail for him to get the leaf wrap. Swampcloud blink at him to show he is grateful before heading inside. He lay on his side as he need to rest after all that running. Soon Swampcloud came back, telling him that thanks to him being so fast, the others will survive. He couldn't respond due to catching his breath. He twitch an ear to tell him that he heard as he close his eyes. After a few minutes, he got up and went inside, nodding at Swampcloud as he pass by. Looking around, he saw Yellowfang, Stumpytail, Clawface, Rowanberry and Scorchwind outside the medicine den. They all had cobwebs and leaves plaster to their fur. All was sleeping except Yellowfang and Newtspeck. Newspeck was padding outside while Yellowfang was laying down. Their eyes were on the den's entrance and he knew it was because they was worried about their kits.

"Any news?" He mew as he pad to her, his tail tip twitching anxiously. He also noticed Hollyflower sitting outside the elder's den, keeping one ear turn towards them.

"Runningnose is helping him right now. Blackfoot and Brokenstar is also inside. They are ones hurt the most but he is worried about Brownpaw. He's on the edge. I can't lose my kit." She whisper as she continue pacing.

"He is strong. He will pull through with Runningnose help. Thanks to you getting the herbs here fast." Marigoldfur mew as she went towards them. She led Newtspeck away to the prey pile.

"Of course." Nightpaw mew as he head to the elders den. He need to do something to take his mind off of Brownpaw. He saw Brownpaw earlier that day. How could he be close to Starclan now. He look up with his tail drooping as he reach Hollyflower.

"Brownpaw will pull through, Nightpaw. Trust in Runningnose. He will be ok." Hollyflower mew as she wrap her tail around him in comfort.

"He is like a brother to me. They all are. I saw him earlier today and he said he was going to get a patrol to help. Never thought he be trying to fight a badger. Can't blame him cuz he was protecting his mother." Nightpaw mew softly.

"That the thing about badgers. Despite their smell, they are very good at sneaking up on cats. Even foxes seem to have trouble with them." Ashfur said as he glance at NIghtpelt sleeping form.

He sighs as he finish replacing Ashfur's nest with clean moss and pine needles. Finishing, he saw Runningnose speaking to Newtspeck. He quickly ran to him, with questions brimming in his eyes.

Brokenstar, Blackfoot and Brownpaw will be ok. Wetpaw and Littlepaw is with him now. You may visit him tomorrow. It be much worst if you didn't get the herbs. Thank you Nightpaw." Runningnose mew with a tired purr.

His eyes widen as he saw Brokenstar walking out the medicine den towards his den. His ear, side and spine was plastered with cobwebs and smelt heavily of herbs. Brokenstar glance at him before going inside. He thought he saw a smile but it was gone too quick for him to be sure. Next was Blackfoot and he had cobwebs on both sides. He went to sit in the middle of the clearing.

"Gather around." His mew was shaky and he try to stand up but Runningnose push him back down. Nightpaw watch the others leaving the dens and sat close to Mousepaw. After the clan gather, he saw Blackfoot glance around to make sure Littlepaw and Wetpaw walk out the medicine den and sat outside.

"The badger has been chased from WindClan onto our territory. We chased the badger out so I want all warriors and apprentices to keep an eye out in case it returns. Just because we are healing doesn't mean you can slack off. All duties will be as normal. Want two border patrols and Littlepaw, help Runningnose replenish his stock. Wolfstep and Flintfang will be in charge of duties while we heal. That is all." Blackfoot mew grew stronger as he talked. Runningnose helped him to a nest outside the medicine den with the rest of the injured warriors. He watch as Littlepaw said something inside

before leaving to meet with Runningnose. Suddenly a paw prod him in the side, and he saw Volewhisper looking at him.

"I know you are tired but Flintfang want us to go on a hunting patrol. You think you are up for it? It is okay if you are not." Volewhisper mew as Mintshade and Tangleburr join them.

"I need something to take my mind off of Brownpaw. A hunt is a perfect distraction." Nightpaw said as the others went through the entrance. Looking back, he felt good to see the camp being so normal after everything that happened. Nothing will bring down ShadowClan spirit.

Chapter 10

[image]

It been two days since the badger attack and Nightpaw has never felt so tired. He been working twice as hard to prove to others that he is here to stay. Badgerfang told him that he is making good progress and soon he might have a warrior assessment. Before going into the den, he look around to see if Gingerpaw want to eat with him. He saw that most of the injured warriors was getting better. Runningnose had Littlepaw help him with checking injuries, telling him which needs a new dressing on their wounds. Littlepaw didn't seem to mind since Runningnose is the only medicine cat and he can't handle it all on his own. Nightpaw can tell Clawface wasn't exactly happy but knew it was necessary. Brownpaw and Blackfoot was the only ones who couldn't be put on light duties.

Yellowfang is often in Brokenstar's den as he is healing and Runningnose did say family visits often helps patients emotional and mental needs. He couldn't see Gingerpaw around so he just grab a mouse and sat alone since the others was out.

"Hey. Mind if I eat with you?" A voice asks as he felt the meat in his mouth turn dry. What does Swampcloud want with him? He flick an ear before nodding. Swampcloud had a lizard as he sat down to tear the tail off. He noticed the emotion in Swampcloud's dark green eyes, knowing he wasn't here just to enjoy a meal.

"Listen. Just want to say I'm sorry for doubting your determination. See that you barely rest, helping without complaints. Even doing tick duty." He look up from his meal and Nightpaw was surprise at the intense emotions he can see in his eyes. "I'm proud to have a clanmate like you."

"T..thank you Swampcloud. I promise to continue doing my best. This clan is like a family to me now." Nightpaw smile as they continue eating their meals together. Afterwards, it felt like a huge weight lift from his shoulders. Swampcloud gave him a friendly flick with his tail before leaving to talk with his sister.

He gave a small stretch before heading to Brokenstar's den to see if there was anything else he can do before going to sleep. His ears twitch as he heard Hopeheart meow, not surprise that she was there as well. He hesitated, not wanting to intrude on him when Brokenstar voice call him in.

"I can scent you lingering out there Nightpaw. Come in." Brokenstar meow is joyful, letting him know he caught him in a good mood.

"I was wondering if I can do anything-" His words stop as he took in the scene before him. Hopeheart and Wishflame was laying close to him, with Yellowfang washing his back. Brokenstar tail was swishing on the ground slowly.

"Mothers is going to be mothers." Even though I'm leader. What I want you to do is rest. I see how hard you been working and I don't want you to get sick from exhaustion. Besides there is a gathering tomorrow night. Tell Blackfoot to come in so he can announce who is going." Brokenstar mew with an eye roll.

"Yes Brokenstar." He quickly left as it made him uncomfortable seeing such a close bond. He quickly went to Blackfoot who was talking to Scorchwind. After passing the message, he went to the den to fall asleep. He was nearly there when the other apprentices rush in, bragging about the prey they caught. Mousepaw went up to Littlepaw after dropping the mice she caught.

"Hey Littlepaw. Wondering if you want to eat once you are done?" She asks with a shy smile.

"I be happy to. Let me finish bringing these herbs to Runningnose." He replied as he hurry to the medicine den.

Gingerpaw put down her two birds, saying that catching them is like getting revenge against the owl. Turtlepaw purr softly, knowing how important this is for her. Gullpaw just nods as she went into the medicine den to visit Brownpaw. Nightpaw turn to get into his nest when Blackfoot did the clan call. Is he ever going to get to sleep? He wonders as he pads towards the clan rock.

"Brokenstar gave me the list for the gathering patrol. Clawface,

Yellowfang, Russetfur, Tallpoppy, Cinderfur, Crowtail, Archeye, Littlepaw, Gingerpaw and Nightpaw will be going. Go rest and be prepared for tomorrow night. That is all." Blackfoot said in a gruff voice. The clan can see that Blackfoot still need to rest so they move away as he went into his nest in the warrior's den. Finally he can go sleep. He quickly left before he can be interrupt any farther, purring as he laid in his nest. He quickly fell asleep, not even hearing the talking outside.

He woke up after many hours, jumping up quickly when he realize how long he slept.

"What is wrong with you?" Wetpaw grumble as he felt Nightpaw's tail whisk on him. He turn his back and wrap his tail tightly around him.

"Sorry." Nightpaw murmur before leaving the den. He saw it is night as he begin to wash.

"Did you get a good rest?" Badgerfang pad towards him, looking concern.

"Yes but sorry for sleeping so late. Didn't mean to." He look at him before staring at his paws.

"Don't be, you really needed it. You really need to learn how to relax. You been working your paws off since the attack. Do you want to talk about it?"

Talk about what? What can he say? That he felt lazy whenever he is not doing anything. That he worries about getting close to the others. That he might mess up and get Turtlepaw angry at him? Also why he cares so much about what she thinks and what if Gullpaw was right? He didn't even know these was his worries that he bury like one bury dirt.

"I'm fine, really. May I go out for some night hunting? I'm refresh and ready to sink my claws into prey." He stares into Badgerfang eyes, hoping he won't pried farther.

"Sure go ahead. Just keep a lookout for Gingerpaw. She been

working on her fear as you know." Badgerfang left to go to the warrior's den.

He quickly ran out the thorn tunnel. The camp seem cramp as he felt the wind in his fur. A cold breeze is blowing, telling him that leafbare was ever closer. She was out here, despite the cold? Nightpaw walk towards the place where he killed the owl, ducking as he heard Gingerpaw meow. He knew his pelt would hide him in the dark as he crept closer to hear what she was saying.

"For moons you took away what I'm supposed to be. Shadowclan isn't supposed to be scared of the dark. But now I'm a true Shadowclan cat. I beat my fear!" Gingerpaw is yowling into the sky.

He noticed that she is standing on the spot where she got her injuries. He purr softly to himself as he try to leave but he step on a stick, the snap sounding loud in the night.

"Who's there?" Gingerpaw quickly turn around, her claws unsheathe as she peer into the darkness.

"It just me." He step out, the moonlight making his fur glow. "Didn't mean to intrude." He went to sit next to her.

"Oh. Hmm how much did you hear?" she asks as she licks her chest in embarrassment.

"Enough to know that this been hurting you more than you shown." His whiskers twitch as he looks up at the stars. What do the cats see when they look at them? Sure he been here for two moons but still can't see anything but stars. He fluff up his fur to brace against the cold wind.

"I'm sorry. I should have been watching the sky. It...I should have saw it coming." The words tumble out of his mouth before he can stop them. He knew she must have hated him since he got out of it without any injuries. She was just too nice to say anything.

"Oh Nightpaw. I don't blame you. I blame that dirt eating owl. It not like you saw a future vision or something like that. Owls are always a risk during night hunting. I'm still alive because of you and the

others." Gingerpaw put her nose on his ear as she got up to leave. "I let it go. You need to do the same."

"Letting go? Sounds easier than it is. But I will try." He force a smile before heading towards the marsh. He found a small meadow near the marsh and claim it as his thinking spot. The sun will often shine down right on it. He look around when he reach it, making sue no badger or fox came this way. After making sure it was clear, he went to the log that was right in the middle, sitting on it as he look up at the stars. After a few moments, he sigh. Deciding to head back to camp, his ear twitch as he heard a small mouse scurrying around. Remembering his training, he could see the mouse with the moon shining. Unlike during the day, there are more sounds that cover his own pawsteps. Now he need to use the shadow steps and pounce when he is close enough.

After killing the mouse, he went back to camp. Hearing a noise, he froze in place. A whisper sounded nearby and he recognize Scorchwind voice. What was he doing out here? He kept still as both him and Darkflower ran towards the Thunderpath. Their fur brush against each other as they ran. They didn't glance behind them either. He shook himself before continuing to the camp. He nod at Cinderfur as he was guarding the thorn tunnel.

"Out late huh? Been working on your night hunting I see. You may not be born here but you are a Shadowclan cat in my eyes." He purr as Nightpaw tail curl up.

He put the mouse on the prey pile as he went to the apprentice den. He slowly went to his nest, being careful of his tail this time. He noticed that Gingerpaw is fast asleep with Mousepaw as close to her as possible. He fell asleep peacefully and without nightmares.

After waking up the next day, he went to the prey pile and got his mouse he caught last night. He watch the elders wake up, beginning to groom themselves. He begin to deliver their favorite prey to them before digging into his own. They purr gratefully as he did so. He love watching the camp wake up, noticing that despite his injuries, Blackfoot was the first up. He saw him head to the dirt place after stretching. Nightpaw grin to himself as he saw Tallpoppy wake up next. It was no secret that she and Blackfoot has become close so it

wasn't a surprise to that she was the second to wake. It must be cold without her mate. He can only hope his mentor will get together with his crush. The whole camp was abuzz when they had the fighting tournament and he nearly won against Hopeheart.

He didn't join as he knew he didn't have the skills against the warriors or older apprentices. He did enjoy watching the fights and his favorite one is Brokenstar against Scorchwind. Brokenstar won of course and he can't wait to join the next one. He left to bury the bones in the dirt place, coming back to groom as he watch Blackfoot greet Tallpoppy.

"Watching the future of you and Turtlepaw?" He froze as Gullpaw walk out. His tongue was still out as he glare at her.

"What part of just friends don't you get? Besides aren't we too young to think about stuff like that? I want to be a warrior first. What about you and your crush on Littlepaw? I see the way you look at him." He finish grooming, knowing he caught her off guard.

"Since you both are up so early, you both can join me on border patrol." Tallpoppy look over at them.

He hope they wasn't loud enough to be overheard. He watch Gullpaw yawn as Tallpoppy went to wake up the others on the patrol.

"Okay let call a truce. I stop teasing you and you don't reveal my crush." Nightpaw gave a nod as Gullpaw sigh in relief.

"I'm not unreasonable." He flick his ear as the others came towards them.

"What are you two talking about?" Cinderfur asks as he walk up.

"Nothing." Gullpaw and Nightpaw said at the same time. Cinderfur shrug as he left to eat. Nightpaw wait while the others finish eating and follow Tallpoppy. Nothing interesting happens during the morning patrol as it way too early. He thought as he saw Tallpoppy talking to Cinderfur. The others are Volewhisper and Flintfang.

"So are you excited about the gathering tonight? You get to finally

meet the other clans without threat of fighting. This is your first too." Volewhisper slow down in order to walk by his side.

"I want to know more about Riverclan. They seem mysterious because we never see them. I saw Thunderclan and Windclan. But cats that like water? Do they sleep in the river? What do they do when the river freezes? Do they just strave because they never hunt on land? What do they sleep on? Mud? Stones?" Nightpaw questions came out fasdt which surprises everyone on the patrol. He stops after seeing everyone staring at him.

"That the most I ever heard you say." Volewhisper said as the others whiskers twitch in amusement. They continue walking towards the Windclan border.

"I met some Riverclan cats last gathering. They are very stuck up. Thinking they so good looking just cuz their pelts are shiny. Some of them are cool though. Maybe Shellstream will be there. Last gathering, it was announced that Greenflower is in the nursery and he look so proud so I congrat him. He is the father and not as serious as he looks. Can we please agree that Rainfall is a very pretty molly. She is shellstream's sister."

"Again with Rainfall. Volewhisper, you had a crush on her ever since you first met her as a paw." Flintfang groan as he slow down to walk on Nightpaw other side.

"True but you have to admit that she does look like Bluestar. Seems someone broke the code but everyone pretends like they don't see it." Seeing Nightpaw confused look, he quickly explains.

"One of the code is not to have relations with cats outside our clan right." he wait for Nightpaw to agreed. "Bluestar is the leader of Thunderclan. So you explain to me why do Rainfall look so much like a younger version of Bluestar? Rainfall says that her mother is Greypool but come on. Seems that a lie because they are both grey fur cats. Her father is Oakheart, the previous deputy. Rainfall might not know but it is obvious to us. We aren't stupid." Volewhisper gave a wink as if he was letting Nightpaw in on a secret.

"Do warriors break that code a lot?" Gullpaw asks as she look at

them both. She was walking a bit behind them all.

"If we didn't break it, there be family mating with family and that isn't right. Sometimes it is obvious like with Rainfall and and Bluestar while other times it isn't so clear. You remember the elders talking about Reedfeather and Fallowtail?" He look at Flintfang who nodded.

"That must have been huge back in the day. Reedfeather was a Windclan deputy before Tallstar time. I remember Ashfur talking about it when he was night hunting. He snuck over there as a paw when he swore he saw Hailstar with kits and Reedfeather was chasing him. Anyway there been rumors that Darkstripe isn't fully Thunderclan. Same with Sandpaw. Even Tigerclaw which is why he is much bigger than the other Thunderclan cats. After all it not like you can control who you fall in love with." Volewhisper became quiet as they walk near the Windclan border.

Nightpaw eyes widen as he chew over what he just learnt. He know how important the code is but can the code itself be flawed? Volewhisper would be right when he talks about the relations outside of their clan but what about the others? Some of them don't make sense like the reject the kittypet life one. Why was that a rule? He shook his head to focus as he watch Tallpoppy mark the border.

"Am I the only one noticing how quiet it is?" Gullpaw spoke up after a few minutes.

"Gullpaw is right. Windclan would be awake and running around by now. What do you think we should do, Tallpoppy?" Flintfang stare across the border, kneading as if he wants to see what happened.

"We should take a peek. Just have to make sure we don't get caught. You both have been trained in shadow steps so remember your training." Tallpoppy whisper as she walk over the border. The thunderpath was usually quiet this early in the morning. Nightpaw still couldn't believe how long this one Thunderpath was.

Nightpaw and Gullpaw both nodded as they walk behind the warriors in a straight line. This way it looks like only Tallpoppy is

there and not a whole patrol. This is a Shadowclan patrol formation that tricks enemies. Tallpoppy lead the way across the Thunderpath and soon they was on the moors. Nightpaw already didn't like it. The grass is high enough to cover any cats walking and he hate how dry it felt against his pelt. They walk along a well trodden path to the camp, keeping their senses alert for any Windclan cats.

"Something must have happened as we haven't seen anyone and we are getting close to the camp. Usually there be a cat watching and alerting the camp before we get this far." Cinderfur mutters as they walk.

"How can Windclan stand this ground? So dry and the grass itches my fur. No wonder the cats are always angry. I be angry too when it gets hot and my paws are burning." Gullpaw groans as Nightpaw glances back at her with sympathy.

As they climb the hill, they stop at the wall of gorse that protected the camp. Tallpoppy walk around until she saw a heather tunnel that leads down into it, and stop as she let out a gasp. She move enough for the others to see what she saw. The clan is gone. There was remains of prey and the clearing look like there was a battle that happened.

"What happened? There are no bodies so I'm guessing the clan left together. We need to report this right away." Flintfang said with his tail bushing out in alarm. They all hurry back to camp, only slowing down for Volewhisper. Tallpoppy and Flintfang ran ahead while Cinderfur, Nightpaw and Gullpaw wait for Volewhisper to catch up.

They walk into camp together as they saw them explaining what they saw to Blackfoot.

"The whole clan. Brokenstar will know about this as soon as he wakes up. For now go rest as I send out the patrols. Nightpaw, Gullpaw I want you two to wake up Littlepaw and Wetpaw as they are on the first hunting patrol." Blackfoot went to wake up their mentors as Volewhisper sat down to catch his breath.

After doing what Blackfoot said, they both went to take care of the elders. As Nightpaw clean the moss, he asks Ashfur about what

Volewhisper told him.

"Ah yes. So I was an apprentice back then so I don't know all the details. I was doing my final warrior assessment and saw Hailstar holding two kits with Reedfeather chasing him with a patrol. I did complete my assessment because everyone else was watching the direction at where they ran to, not the other directions. Windclan do have great sight during the day but they don't have good sight like we do at night." He gave a yawn as Nightpaw finished.

"Thanks. Never knew there was so much history." He left them as Gullpaw had mouse bile for their ticks. His nose winkled at the smell and quickly move out of the way so he won't get any of it on him.

He watch Brokenstar leave his den as Blackfoot murmur to him about the morning. His eyes widen at how small his wound had become and saw how easily Brokenstar move about. His wound now was like a scratch and was barely different from the other scratches on his pelt. Is this evidence that Starclan is real? How else could a huge life threating wound be so mall so fast? He remember hearing that leaders were blessed by Starclan to have longer lives but does it even mean that their wounds heal faster? He glance at Blackfoot and saw that his wound look normal. It was healing but much slower than Brokenstar wound. Shaking these thoughts from his head, he went to visit Brownpaw. He was still in the medicine den, with Runningnose looking after him.

He padded slowly to the entrance, poking his head in, hoping he was awake.

"Nightpaw! Finally something is happening. You won't believe how boring it is here." Brownpaw eyes glitter as he quickly sat up in the nest.

"Boring? Could be a little grateful squirt. Come on in and tell us what is going on out there. That a lot of movement for the morning." Runningnose was making poultices and smearing it on the many wounds on Brownpaw pelt. He also gather some herbs, telling Brownpaw to eat them, putting his ear to Brownpaw chest as he does so. Brownpaw sat still, like he is used to this by now. He

begin sniffing at the many cuts, making sure no infection has set in.

Nightpaw came in and sat down, wrapping his tail around his paws as he explains everything that happened. His ears flick uncomfortably as he wasn't used to having anyone attention for a long time.

"The whole clan is gone?! Even the kits and queens? Did you check the dens? When it is raining, I heard from Barkface that they sleep in old badger dens. Or was it rabbits? Barkface is the Windclan medicine cat." Runningnose softly said as Nightpaw finished.

"There was no time to check. We rush back to tell Blackfoot the news." He replied with a flick of his ear.

"May all those who hunt in the shadows gather here beneath the clanrock for a clan meeting!" Brokenstar voice rang out and Nightpaw quickly ran out to get a spot at the front. Brownpaw try to go but Runningnose push him back in his nest.

"I will tell you everything if you be good and stay there." He said as he left to sit in front of the medicine den. Brownpaw gave a frustrated snort before settling back down.

Blackfoot was in his spot, besides the clanrock, looking stern as the clan gathered beneath. Nightpaw look around and saw two queens with one grey kit near one directly below the clanrock. That when he smelt the scent of Windclan on them, and Littlepaw patrol was back. That was too fast. Seems they were found on Shadowclan territory and escorted back to camp. That makes sense, he thought as he felt Wetpaw sitting besides him. His ear swivel as he heard pawsteps at the tunnel, he look and saw the others who was out on patrol. Scorchwind, Turtlepaw, and Mossclaw quickly found spots as they saw the clan had gathered, dropping their catch on the pile.

"As you can see we have guests. This is Ashfoot, Morningflower and Eaglekit of Windclan. They was spotted by Clawface patrol near Carrionplace. They said that they escaped the attack yet didn't explain how. They are asking to stay until Morningflower kits are born and is strong enough to travel back to Windclan. Go ahead and tell my clan who exactly attacked you." Brokenstar sat down,

looking down at them, his claws scaping the moss that was on the rock.

The gray queen with the kit stood up, and Nightpaw can see anxiety in her eyes, yet her voice sounded strong as she spoke. Being a queen didn't weaken the resolve these warriors had.

"The attack happened three nights ago. We don't know who they were but I heard shouts of Snipe as the attack happened. Tallstar and the rest of my clan fought bravely but there was way too many of them, and they aimed to kill so guessing these were rogues. The fight lasted long into the night before Tallstar call a retreat. Morningflower and I was separated from the clan as they ran in one direction while we ran towards the border. A white molly saw us but didn't give chase and I saw her murmur to a yellow brown tabby tom. He glance and went back into our camp. What surprised us is that they smelt like Shadowclan. But none of the cats are ones I recognize and some even had spiked collars. I carry my son and hid near the carrionplace, hoping the smell will cover our escape. I ask for shelter as Morningflower is very close to kitting and we need a medicine cat to watch over her." Ashfoot glance up at Brokenstar, Eaglekit mewing for milk.

"Why not go to Thunderclan? They are more soft hearted than us." Tangleburr mew as she glare at the Windclan cats.

"Thunderclan? Don't you remember the story of the last time they thought Windclan was weak? Pinestar led an attack on the medicine den, hoping to destroy their supplies, right when Leaf bare started. Heard Bluestar's mother died in that attack. Rightly so but still, Thunderclan is not to be trusted." Wishflame said with a growl.

"How do you know that? That is Windclan history. Not yours." Morningflower hissed.

"My dear, there is no shadows where Shadowclan is concerned. Anyway you may stay until Windclan is back. Runningnose will look over the both of you when you are settled in our nursery. Brightflower will take care of you as she is our oldest and most experienced queen. The gathering is tonight and I want double patrols while we are there. No doubt these rogues know our

routines and might strike when we are least expecting it. Boulder, I want to talk to you and Russetfur in my den. Meeting dismissed!" Brokenstar was about to jump down when Ashfoot interrupt him.

"May I please ask that no one tells anyone that we are here? We don't want to risk the safety of our kits." She reach down to lick Eaglekit between the ears, stopping his mewing for the moment.

Brokenstar gave a nod as the clan gather in small groups to talk about what just happened. Brightflower led the queens to the nursery, helping them settle in. Nightpaw swivel his ears, catching small snippets of conversations.

"So does this mean we can hunt on their land? No one is there and it be a waste." Applefur was murmuring to Ratscar and Stumpytail.

"Are these the same rogues that Badgerfang patrol ran into that one day? With Nightpaw's brother?" Dawncloud asks Mossclaw as he was cleaning his ear thoughtfully.

Nightpaw felt his heart tightened as he quickly went to the apprentice den so not to hear the answer. These rogues chased an entire clan out? Is his brother safe? What about the other clans? Does this mean Shadowclan have to shelter all of them as Bloodclan strike them down?! His fur was fluff out and it seem he couldn't get enough air. He bump into Badgerfang, who stop as he look over Nightpaw state.

"calm down. Take deep breaths. Relax. Close your eyes. Remember what Runningnose said. Count to ten. You are safe." Badgerfang voice grounded Nightpaw so he can focus. He isn't in danger. He can protect himself.

Runningnose call them panic attacks and it takes a while before he can calm down from them. Badgerfang wait patiently, knowing Nightpaw hate being touched during these attacks. He wish he can claw the ones who gave them to his apprentice but it was Twolegs. There nothing he can do but shield others from seeing him in that state. With his fluffy body, that exactly what he was doing.

"Don't you dare say sorry Nightpaw. These are troubling times and

everyone feels like you do. Go rest for tonight." Badgerfang voice was stern but he gave him a nudge towards his nest, his eyes showing understanding as he curl up, slicking down his fur before closing his eyes.

No matter what happens, Shadowclan will survive. Brokenstar will see to it.

Chapter 11

[image]

The full moon is shining down into a clearing with four oaks. Nightpaw is kneading the ground as he wait for Brokenstar to give the signal to go down.

"Shadowclan is always the first to arrive. Should go explore before it gets filled up with the others." Littlepaw softly mew as he glance at Nightpaw.

"Wonder if the others know about Windclan?" Gingerpaw is on his other side.

"Even if they do, we don't say a word about it. Let see what the other clans been up to." Archeye mew softly from behind them as Brokenstar raised his tail and lead the way to the clearing. The rest went to find good places to sit as Littlepaw begin to show Nightpaw around.

"That rock is where the leaders sit. Riverclan leader is Crookedstar. Trust me, you will know him when you see him. Bluestar is Thunderclan's leader. You probably already know this due to them being our closest rivals. Close to the rock is where the deputies sit. Leopardfur is Riverclan's deputy. I heard she is cold, even for a Rivercat. Lionheart is warmer but Thunderclan is the friendly clan. Or that is what the elders say." Littlepaw ears perk up as he glance to the south west. Nightpaw look to the edge of the clearing to see other cats approaching. These cats were thicker and their paw steps were heavy.

The paw steps were followed by the scent of fish and Nightpaw made a face as he smelt it. His eyes widen as a huge tabby with a twisted jaw went towards Brokenstar. Littlepaw wasn't kidding when he said he will know Crookedstar when he see him. He want to know the story but knew it be rude to ask. Littlepaw motion him to follow as he walk towards a pale grey tom with shredded ears. The warrior's eyes narrow as he saw them approaching.

"Hey Shellstream. Volewhisper says hi. How is the prey swimming?" Littlepaw voice was like chatting with a clanmate. Nightpaw ears twitch warily as Shellstream ears twitch. He begin to feel self conscious as he notice how sleek all the Riverclan cats look, feeling shabby in comparison.

"Doing well. And tell Volewhisper that my kits haven't been born yet. Haven't met your friend. There been rumors that Thunderclan and Shadowclan had something in common. Is it true that you let a kittypet into your clan? He looks tough." He gave a friendly blink as Nightpaw fur begin to bristle.

Realizing that he was just teasing, he settle down. Besides one of the rule is no fighting during the gathering. He lick his chest fur in embarrassment as he thought on how to respond.

"My name is Nightpaw and yes I was a kittypet. Don't think that means I don't know how to fight. I heard about you Shellstream. Mostly due to Volewhisper. He do like to tell tales." He let out a small mrrow of amusement.

"Hey Shellstream, didn't know you like talking to apprentices. Who is your friends?" A voice interrupt what he was going to respond as a pale grey and white molly bounce up. Her blue eyes look at them both with such friendliness that Nightpaw wondered if everyone was wrong about the friendly clan being Thunderclan.

"Nightpaw. Littlepaw. Meet my youngest sister Willowstep. Don't be fooled. She is a fierce warrior." He mew as he move so she can sit with them.

"Haven't met you before, Nightpaw. How are you liking the gathering?" She ask as he begin to look around. Littlepaw was carrying on a quiet conversation with Shellstream.

He notice other warriors in small groups talking and it looks so peaceful. The elders were all together, probably talking about the past. Brokenstar was murmuring into Crookedstar's ear and he nodded to what he was saying. Saw Blackfoot's smirk as he seem to get under a spotted molly's pelt which he guess is Leopardfur. Why can't the clans just be this? If it wasn't for scents, he would have

thought this was a huge gathering of one clan.

"This is nice. Didn't know the clans can be at peace like this. I do wonder if you sleep in the river. Still can't wrap my head around cats who like to be in water." He look down at his paws, wondering if he was being rude.

"It the same with us and wonder how you can stand the marsh. Isn't it hard to walk around with your paws in mud all the time?" She counter with a friendly bump. He look up at her with a grin.

"But no we don't sleep in the river. We have nests made of reeds. What do you make your nest out of? I know Thunderclan uses moss and leaves. Last time we had no time to share tongues so I couldn't ask. Unless it is a secret. I know how you Shadowcats are with revealing anything."

"We use pine needles. It is very comfortable. Speaking of Thunderclan, I wonder where they are. They are usually here by now." Littlepaw interject as he stood up to look around.

"Probably going to make an entrance like they always do. The heroes of the forest always arrive in dramatic fashion." A pale blue molly spoke drily as she walk towards them. Her plumy tail wave slowly as she walk and Nightpaw didn't need introductions to guess who this is. Volewhisper is right, Rainfall is a good looking molly.

"Well speak of the cats, here they come now." Shellstream said as he glance south east and towards a hill. Nightpaw quickly stood up, hoping he can see a flame colored pelt as they ran down.

"I know who you are looking for," Rainfall murmur in his ear as she is next to him, watching Thunderclan mingle with the others.

"I'm going to look for him. Nice talking to you all. Thanks for making me feel welcome." Nightpaw mew as he ran off. Littlepaw stay to talk to them more as the crowd swallow them up.

Please be here. He wave his tail at Spottedleaf as she went to join the other medicine cats. He is surprise to see Ravenpaw as he seem to be too timid to be at a gathering. He was talking to other

apprentices, seemingly blind to Tigerclaw watching him. He is so into his story as he motion wildly with his body. Nightpaw eyes widen as a flash of hatred cross Tigerclaw's face. What is that about? He wonder as he join them.

"Told you we have things in common." He murmur as he is behind Firepaw. He purr a bit as he jump, turning around with a glare. He sat next to him, listening to the other apprentices asking Ravenpaw questions about his story.

He motion to Firepaw away from the others so they can talk.

"Who are you?" Firepaw tilt his head as he told him.

"What was it like to join Thunderclan? Shadowclan isn't what others think. They didn't give me that much of a hard time." Nightpaw murmur as Firepaw show disbelief.

"But your ear? Did Shadowclan do that?" He asks with eyes widening.

"Oh, this? I forgot about it. Got it from fighting rogues." Nightpaw puff his chest out as he touch the cut.

"If Longtail was here, you will see what I did to him. I have to work hard and do you get lonely because no one else can understands?"

"Yes! That why I wanted to talk to you. Who is your mentor? Mine is Badgerfang. He is stict and fair." Nightpaw purr a bit at remembering his past lessons.

"Before I was being mentored by Lionheart, Whitestorm and Tigerclaw. But now Tigerclaw is going to be my mentor full time. You will find out why soon." Firepaw gave a smirk as he glance over at Tigerclaw. He was busy talking in a group with other warriors.

"What did you do to Sandpaw though? She describe you as a stuck up fox heart." His eyes widen in amazement as Nightpaw told him.

"You are brave. They are still teasing me about being a former kittypet. I hate it. Been with them for close to two moons. My

kittypet stink is long gone." His claws dug into the ground and Nightpaw can see how frustrated he was.

"Know what I did? Told them off. That why they don't tease me about it anymore. Just stand up for yourself. If they are mean, be mean right back. Show them your claws." Nightpaw's tail was about to touch Firepaw's shoulder but a yowl stop him.

They ran back into the crowd, seeing the leaders on the rock. Nightpaw couldn't believe how tough the leaders look up there, staring down at them. He saw Bluestar, again noting that Volewhisper was right about how she and Rainfall look alike. He walk until he found a spot next to Gingerpaw. She gave a friendly nod before looking back at the leaders.

"It is time for the gathering to begin." Bluestar said in a commanding tone.

"But Windclan isn't here. We can't start without Windclan." Voices start in protest as Bluestar raise her tail, quieting the crowd.

"Seem Brokenstar want to start regardless." Bluestar step back, giving space for him to step forward to address the crowd.

"We can't wait for Windclan all night. The prey is running well and we chased out two badgers from our territory. I would like to thank Thunderclan for giving us much needed herbs." Brokenstar gave a nod to Bluestar and glance down at the medicine cats. Nightpaw glance at the medicine cats, widening his eyes in surprise when he saw Ravenpaw sitting with them. No wonder Tigerclaw seem angry at him. He lost his apprentice.

"I would also like to thank an apprentice that got us the medicine in a timely manner. Nightpaw, our newest apprentice that used to be a kittypet. We are growing and Shadowclan is thriving. Brokenstar grin at him as the others turn to look at him. He sat up straight, his tail flicking a bit at the attention. He wasn't expecting Brokenstar to mention him, but after seeing the respect in other eyes, he begin to feel pride. Firepaw gave him a friendly shove as Brokenstar step back, giving Crookedstar space.

"Sound like your clan has a badger problem. Riverclan also had to chase off a badger. It is thanks to Shellstream patrol that made sure it was gone. The prey is swimming like always."

He look towards Bluestar as she step forward. She look a bit stern as she walk up.

"Like you two, my clan also chased out a badger. Though I'm sorry to say it may been one of the badgers you fought, Brokenstar. As they chased it over to your territory. Anyway Firepaw, is now being mentored by Tigerclaw. Ravenpaw asks to become a medicine cat apprentice as he feels that warrior isn't the right path for him. He is now Spottedleaf's apprentice."

"That makes sense. I never seen him in a battle or even fight. He seem so timid too." Nightpaw's ear turn as he heard a Riverclan cat murmur. He saw Firepaw's pelt begin to bristle but with a touch of his tail, he calm down.

"Bet they would regret that when Riverclan needs his help." He murmur into Firepaw's ear with a purr. Firepaw purr back as they continue listening to Bluestar's report.

"I did notice the lack of activity on Windclan border so I took a patrol over there. Apparently Windclan is gone. The whole clan is gone. Do you have anything to say about this, Brokenstar?" Bluestar look at him, eyes narrowing as gasps sound out at this.

"That a serious accusation, Bluestar. My clan was busy healing from the badger attack, as you know. Why do you suspect my clan? How do you know it wasn't badgers? We all had to fight them." Brokenstar's mew was calm, looking at her as his tail curl around his paws.

"Because the scent of Shadowclan was everywhere. It was around their camp. We all know that Shadowclan would do anything to expend their territory." Bluestar mew is confident as outrage came from Shadowclan.

"What is your leader problem?" Blackfoot snarl to Lionheart.

"We know the truth even if the rest of you ignore it." Lionheart snarl back.

Nightpaw let out a snarl as the clans separate.

"This gathering is over! Be careful Bluestar, for there is no safety in shadows." Brokenstar jump down and gather the clan around him.

Nightpaw quickly whisper to Firepaw. "We should meet up when things calm down. I get a message to you somehow." He flinch as he saw Archeye, staring at him with his eyes narrow.

He quickly ran to the others as they left, pelts bristling in anger. As they ran back, Nightpaw couldn't believe what happened. Is this how the other clans see them? As an evil clan? Wanting to take over territory? If Thunderclan sees themselves as the heroes, do they think Shadowclan should be the villains? Bluestar look so confident as she accuse Shadowclan, like she strongly believed that she is right.

As they went inside the camp, Brokenstar quickly jump onto the rock and told the rest exactly what happened.

"Seems the rogues plan is working as Bluestar accused us of chasing Windclan away. This shows us two things. The rogues have been paying attention to the way our clans interact. And they are smart enough to use this knowledge." He look at the nursery as Ashfoot is sitting outside. "Ashfoot, did your clan welcome any outsider? I'm beginning to suspect that this plan has been long in the making."

"Actually yes. Tallstar welcome two cats as visitors. A molly name Tess and a tom named Claw. Despite their rough appearance, they were kind cats. They was sleeping when the attack happened though they disappeared when the clan ran. We didn't blame them as they had no fighting experience." Ashfoot gave a thoughtful expression as she look at the clan.

"I see. I will be going to the Moonstone tomorrow night. Hoping they give us some guidance to find your clan and how to move forward. We should keep a lookout for an alliance between Thunderclan and Riverclan. Shadowclan is strong and will never

fall!" The clan cheer as Brokenstar jump down to talk to the senior warriors.

"Sorry that your gathering broke up but wasn't it cool to meet the other clans?" Gullpaw asks as the other apprentices went to the den.

"I did meet the other kittypet and he seem nice. Too bad about his crazy leader though." Nightpaw mew softly as Blackfoot came towards them.

"Nightpaw, Littlepaw, and Turtlepaw. Brokenstar want you three to go to the Moonstone tomorrow night. I suggest you rest as you have a long journey ahead of you." Blackfoot gave a small smile as he saw their expressions. "All three of you have worked hard so don't waste this opportunity to show Brokenstar all you learnt."

"We won't Blackfoot!" They said in unison, their eyes sparking with excitement.

Blackfoot turn to the others. "Runningnose just told me that Brownpaw will be coming back to the den, being able to be put on light duty. So don't be too rough with him. Don't want to reopen any of his wounds. He will be back tomorrow." Blackfoot left towards the warriors' den as Nightpaw quickly went to his nest. He wasn't the only one either. The moonstone is where they talk to Starclan. Maybe this is where he learnt about what Starclan is. He can't wait.

Chapter 12

[image]

A paw prodded Nightpaw until he open one eye. He saw Littlepaw looking at him.

"Time to get up. The way to the Moonstone is long so we got to get there early. After all it takes Runningnose all day to get there, despite us not having to cross any other clan territories." He went to wake up Turtlepaw while Nightpaw gave a yawn and stretch.

He blink slowly as he walk outside. He saw Ashfoot stepping outside, her head turn to mew something to Morningflower. He begin to wash when he notice her looking at him. She walk towards him, and he finish washing, ears flicking nervously.

"You the kittypet right? I heard the others talking about you. Guess we are both strangers in this clan. I also heard you was on the patrol that discovered our camp. You didn't happen to see any cats there?" She ask softly with concern in her eyes.

There must be a cat she is worry about. Nightpaw thought as he answer. "No. The camp was completely empty. There was fresh kill but didn't see anyone there. Maybe Brokenstar will send another patrol to check it out more fully before we leave. Yes I'm the former kittypet." He put emphasis on the word former.

Her eyes flash as she notice but didn't say anything about it. She smile at him before Runningnose interrupt them. He is holding three leaf wraps.

"Ah there you are, Nightpaw. Got traveling herbs for you." He drop a leaf wrap in front of him before turning to Ashfoot. "Hello Ashfoot. How have you been adjusting? Is Eaglekit alright?" He put down the other two leaf wraps that he was holding.

"Yes he is fine. I miss the taste of rabbits so going to ask Brokenstar if he can send a hunting party. I will give him permission so there

should be no trouble. It is hard to make my kit sleep when he see everyone else is awake. Thank you for checking up on him when we arrive. Nice talking to you, Nightpaw. Should head to talk to Brokenstar before patrols are sent." Ashfoot went to Brokenstar den with her tail dragging behind her.

He watch her go inside, feeling sorry for the fierce queen. He knew what it like to be an outsider. *But to have your whole clan gone is something he hoped will never happen to him or the clan.* Despite most of the clan accepting him, he still feels a separation between him and the others.

"Must be hard to get kick out of your own home. I will check on them later. Anyway, where is Turtlepaw and Littlepaw? Brokenstar, Mintshade and Marigoldfur already got their herbs." Runningnose murmur as he glance at him, concern in his eyes.

"Right here." Turtlepaw and Littlepaw both walk outside, with their fur already groomed. Nightpaw gave a small sniff, not liking the bitter scent. *Maybe I should wait for them to eat it first. Won't be my first time dealing with poison.*

"Here is your herbs. Littlepaw, what herbs are in it?" Runningnose asks as he drop them.

Littlepaw gave a small sniff before eating it. "Sorrel, daisy, chamomile and burnet. It keeps the hunger at bay and gives you energy." He grimace at the taste.

Nightpaw ears flatten as he saw the pity glance that Runningnose gave him. He quickly ate his, hoping others didn't notice his hesitation. "Why can't we just eat fresh kill?" He asks while trying to get rid of the taste.

"It's a way to purify our body when we go talk to our ancestors in Starclan. Think of it like a test before we can communicate. You can handle one day of not eating right?" Marigoldfur walk up to them with Mintshade behind her. She gave a small sniff before walking towards the entrance tunnel.

"That makes sense, I guess." He mumble as Brokenstar left his den.

"Don't mind her. She is just nervous. Leaders don't visit the Moonstone unless it is important." Mintshade gave a friendly blink before joining her.

"Blackfoot, take care of the clan. Ashfoot did give us permission but don't go overboard. Keep an eye on both Thunderclan and Riverclan. You know how they get when they think we are the villains." Brokenstar was meowing as he walk towards the group.

"Ready? Follow close to us apprentices, as it is your first time heading to the Moonstone." He pad quickly out the tunnel with the others close behind. Nightpaw follow besides Littlepaw who grin as they walk towards Carrionplace. He never going to get used to the stink as they went pass it. The ground is soft on his paw pads though he begin to get tired due to how long they been walking. His paws begin hurting but he kept it to himself as he didn't want the others to think of him as weak. Soon they reach the edge of the territory. Brokenstar stop, looking behind him to see how they were holding up. There was a small thunderpath leading to Carrionplace.

"Monsters don't come on this path often. They just drop their rubbish and leaves. Look across and you should see highstones." He said as he sat down.

"What is beyond highstones?" Turtlepaw asks as her eyes sparkle with wonder as she stare at the mountains. Nightpaw sat down to catch his breath, looking at the others, seeing they weren't as tired as he is. He can see that they been walking for hours due to the position of the sun. The sun was just rising when they left, but now it seems to be close to setting. No one spoke during the journey and he was busy keeping pace with the others. Nightpaw look at the highstones, trying to see the top as he clean his paws.

"Some say there are animals that live in those mountains. A huge cat, like a lion without the fur around it neck. But that just stories." Nightpaw jump as Littlepaw whisper to him.

"No one knows. There are rumors of course." Brokenstar answer as he shot a glare at Littlepaw who quickly shut his muzzle. "But we don't need to know. Our clans have lived in the territories for years and we have no reason to leave."

"Besides why should we ever travel? Our territory has everything we need." Mintshade added as Marigoldfur gave a curt nod.

"After we rest, we will continue to the Moonstone. We must make it before the moon rises. You will understand why." Brokenstar look to Nightpaw before walking across the small thunderpath towards highstones.

He motion to Nightpaw to join him as they walk across the path. He caught Turtlepaw's curious gaze as he walk through the group to walk besides Brokenstar. His tail tip twitch a bit as he wonder if he was in trouble.

"I understand that you don't believe in Starclan. That is why tonight, I'm giving you permission to come with me to the Moonstone. Seeing is believing and you need this to understand. After tonight your life will change. Are you ready for this? You can back out if you want." He glance sideways at him.

"What do I need to do? Since it is called the Moonstone, I'm guessing it a huge rock. What is going to happen when I go there?" He hate how small his voice became but he can't help the nervousness in him. It was like he got fleas in his pelt trying to break out.

"You will share with Starclan. Just lie down and touch your nose to the stone. Starclan will share with you. Don't be afraid as they mean you no harm. I don't know what they will share with you as it is different for every cat. But we must not talk until we are out of the cave. You can share your vision with me or Runningnose as they aren't always clear." Brokenstar stop at the entrance to a cave.

He didn't notice how close they were. The stones underneath his paws reminded him of Twolegplace so he was used to hard surfaces. Looking behind him, he saw the others wince and begin digging the grits and stones from their paw pads. He sat down and begin to work on his own.

"You can hunt around here but need to be back before the moon rises." Marigoldfur said as she look at the apprentices.

Mintshade and the others left to go hunt while Brokenstar, Marigoldfur and Nightpaw sat down. He look at the cave entrance, feeling like his world is about to turn upside down. He can smell nothing or hear anything from the cave. His ear twitch as Brokenstar begin to pace, glancing at the sky. He didn't know how much time has pass when a paw prod him and he jump with a small hiss.

"Easy. It is just us. Want to share these mice? They were so slow, like they never been hunted before." Littlepaw mew with four mice in his mouth.

"What were you thinking about? Seem so deep in thought." Turtlepaw asks as Littlepaw pass the mice around.

"Brokenstar want me to go with him to the Moonstone. He knows I don't believe and I'm wondering what I'm going to see. I decided to go since believing is seeing." He huff softly, trying to calm his racing thoughts. He begin to eat.

"So lucky. Though it makes sense. We grew up on Starclan but to you, it seems like stories. I wish I can see the Moonstone." Turtlepaw voice carry a hint of jealousy as she tear into her mouse.

"Don't worry Turtlepaw. Every apprentice will share dreams with Starclan before we become warriors. It is a rite of passage so to speak. At least that what Mossclaw told me before he became a warrior. He is the youngest warrior. But for Nightpaw, this is important." Littlepaw assure her. "This way he can be a true Shadowclan warrior. Besides what if he wants to be leader? All Leaders have to share with Starclan to get their name and lives." He continue with an earnest look over his shoulder at Brokenstar.

Leader? I didn't even think of that. I just want to fit in and become a warrior. Wouldn't that mean both Brokenstar and Blackfoot have to die? Before his anxiety can spike, Brokenstar stood up.

"It's time. Marigoldfur, Nightpaw and Littlepaw will go in with me. Mintshade and Turtlepaw will stand guard outside. Keep your nose on the tail of the cat in front of you. It is very dark within the tunnel." He is standing in front of the entrance with Marigoldfur

behind him. Nightpaw stood behind her and felt Littlepaw's excited breath on his tail tip.

As they walk, he couldn't believe how dark it is. He know his eyes are open but he might as well be blind. Brokenstar sometimes murmur as he led the way, warning them of a tight squeeze or turn. He begin to wonder if they will ever reach the cave when fresh air tickle his whiskers. Soon he felt the space open up but it was still dark. At least they can stand shoulder to shoulder now.

"Wait for it." Marigoldfur whisper as she move aside to let them through. Looking up, he saw stars in a hole above the cave so it wasn't completely dark like the tunnels. Suddenly a flash of blinding light lit up the Moonstone and he closed his eyes against the glare. He open them and his mouth drop open. The Moonstone lit up the cave, where Brokenstar and the others' fur glowed silver in the light.

"Quickly, we mustn't waste the moonlight. Nightpaw, lay close to me and put your nose on the stone." Brokenstar lay down and did it himself as he join him.

A cold chill enter his body when he touch the stone and he close his eyes. After a few moments, he wonder if he was doing it right. Opening his eyes, he saw that the cave is gone and he is in a grass meadow. He roll in the grass and pat it with his paws. It felt like real grass. He sniff and it smell like he was outside. Looking up, he saw the night sky full of stars. Blinking, he saw the stars begin to move and they fell in front of him, turning into shapes of cats. A white cat with long whiskers and gentle blue eyes pad towards him while the others left. It seem Starclan cats fur glimmer like they have stars in their pelt.

"Welcome to Starclan, little one. My name is Sagewhisker and I was the pevious medicine cat before Runningnose. Starclan elected me to come to you since you didn't believe until now. Follow me and come quickly as the place is far." Sagewhisker begin to run and the scenery begin to change from grass meadows to mountains and he felt like they was running for miles.

Despite the running, he didn't feel tired at all. They came across

what look like a twolegplace with houses and roads but no monsters. Is this where kittypets go? His eyes widened as he saw a pure white cat with wild fur walking around. His father! Last he saw his father, he got hit by a monster while crossing the Thunderpath. He was sitting on a fence and it happened so fast that he couldn't react.

"I assume he can tell you what you want to know better than I can." Sagewhisker purr at his face as his father begin to run towards them.

"Welcome back Sagewhisker. If it isn't midnight. Heard you join the clans. Don't worry about the others as I'm keeping a good eye on them. I have to tell you this. Listen carefully." His father eyes went completely white and he spoke with more voices than his own.

"Beware the claw that hunts the sun, for only shadows can smother it's fury." Nightpaw tilt his head in confusion.

"Dad? What does that mean?" He asks as Sagewhisker begin to push him away. They ran back to Starclan hunting grounds.

"Fluffy is going to join us here. It is time for you to go. Remember the prophecy." Sagewhisker repeat it once more before he felt his body becoming heavy.

Slowly opening his eyes, he saw everyone looking down at him. He try to speak but Marigoldfur quickly place her tail on his muzzle. Oh right. Can't speak until they leave the cave. Brokenstar lead the way back out and it seem quicker this time. Soon they reach the exit and only words Brokenstar said is hurry. Looking up, Nightpaw saw the sun is rising and realize they spent the whole night there. No wonder medicine cats aren't back until the next day. As they ran, he saw Turtlepaw giving him a glance every now and then. They stop before the path, taking a small break.

"What's going on?" Mintshade asks as they catch their breath. Brokenstar glance at them before answering.

"Raggedstar told me we would be under attack when we return. Either by the rogues or Thunderclan. Maybe even both. So we must

get back as quick as possible." His eyes narrow as he ran off.

As they ran, Nightpaw saw Turtlepaw besides him. "So what did you see?" She whisper as she glance at the warriors ahead of them. Littlepaw was on his other side.

Quickly filling them in, he watch as their eyes got big with wonder and excitement. "Tonight we need to get everyone together. Maybe we can figure out what they meant." He whisper back as he stare forward determinedly. Soon sounds of fighting was heard as they near the camp.

They stop as they saw a mass battle going on in front of the entrance. In fact Flintfang is blocking the tunnel, clawing any rogue that came too close.

Brokenstar jump into the battle as he claw a large brown tom off of Wetpaw. Mintshade and Marigoldfur both help out Yellowfang who is fighting a skinny tortoiseshell tom with a spiked collar. Nightpaw saw Swampcloud backing away from the same ginger tom that was clawing his brother. Seeing red, he ran towards the fight, and bit the rogue leg. He felt satisfied as he taste blood and heard the rogue let out a pained yowl. Swampcloud didn't waste the distraction and claw his cheek. Letting out an angry hiss, he let go, jump on the rogue back and begin clawing it, jumping off when the rogue try to fall on him. He landed besides Swampcloud as the rogue quickly stood back up.

"Seems Snag found some more prey. Wait, I know you. You was the one who claw up Scraps real good. Been wanting to repay the favor." He hiss.

"All you going to get is scars." Nightpaw hiss back as he charge at Snag. He aim a claw which Snag dodge but Swampcloud came at him on the other side. With a nod to each other, they team up and force Snag back towards the middle of the battle. As the battle raged, a brown and white tabby molly call out a retreat.

"Bloodclan retreat! We did our job. We are done here." Soon many cats break apart and ran back towards Twolegplace.

Swampcloud and Nightpaw look at each other in confusion. Blackfoot look around, seeing Brokenstar and the others that came back.

"They been attacking for a while. And then as you seen, they run away. No idea what their end goal is but no patrols had been out yet. Seem they trying to get us tired. Everyone who need healing, go to the medicine den. Those who can, go on hunting patrols." Blackfoot sat down and begin to lick his wounds.

"You did good, Nightpaw. I can see why he wants you to take a warrior's assessment soon. Thought he was just bragging. After all you haven't been training long." Swampcloud gave him a friendly bump before leaving to hunt.

Looking around, he didn't see Littlepaw or Turtlepaw. Hearing a muffled voice behind a tree, he reach it and saw quite a sight. Both Littlepaw and Turtlepaw is holding down a white furred molly with green eyes. Turtlepaw had a paw on the molly's head, pushing her down so her mouth is in the ground. It was the molly's voice he heard before.

"Nightpaw! Found this one trying to spy on us. She thought she could hide behind this tree when the others left. Help us drag her to the others." Turtlepaw's eyes is full of relief when she saw him.

"We had to use our skills to get the jump on her. Here, take my place while I go get a warrior. Wonder if I will become a warrior just for this." Littlepaw's eyes shine as he move so Nightpaw can take his place on holding down the molly body.

Nightpaw place his paws on her, noticing how she didn't seem to resist when he took his place. She raised her head and he was taken aback by the hatred in her eyes.

"Thought you clan cats are honorable. Let me go you fox hearts!" The molly hissed as Turtlepaw force her head back down.

"She been saying stuff like that for a while." Turtlepaw said as she met his curious glance.

"Why do Bloodclan hate us? What did we do to them? We don't deal with Twolegplace. We are only defending ourselves. Nightpaw look down at the molly whose eyes was closed. Being suspicious, he dug his claws into her side, forcing her to wince.

"Those are excellent questions, Nightpaw. Good job, Turtlepaw and Littlepaw." Brokenstar voice sounded as he look up, seeing them approach. Brokenstar walk up with Rowanberry, Ratscar and Stumpytail. Littlepaw is in front of them, leading the way.

"Let her up. Can't see her clearly with you both on her. Bloodclan cat. Don't even think of running." Ratscar hiss as they surrounded her.

She slowly got up, blinking slowly with her body tense as she look around. Nightpaw and Turtlepaw both step away after letting her go. He saw her freeze when her eyes met Ratscar. Everyone watch as Ratscar mouth drop open.

"Snow?!"

Chapter 13

The air is tense as Nightpaw glance between Brokenstar and Ratscar. How does Ratscar know this rogue? He notice Snow looking around before glaring at Ratscar.

"So guess you refuse to say it. I'm Bark's sister. So this is where you been after you abandoned your family." Snow eyes narrow as her neck fur bristled in anger.

"I didn't abandon you. I went back after hunting and saw those bloodclan cats destroying our camp. They killed our mother and brother when they tried to fight. Didn't see you so thought you was dead as well. Sorry if I didn't want to throw away my life." Ratscar hiss with a swipe of his forepaw. She flinch despite him not being close enough to hit her.

"Enough. Ratscar, go hunt. Burn off some of that energy." Brokenstar watch him as he let out a small hiss and left.

"His name is Ratscar now? Guess it a bit better than Bark." Snow murmur as she watch him leave, a small glint of emotion in her eyes before hardening as she sat down.

"Be quiet. Follow us and don't think about running." Stumpytail growl as Brokenstar led the way through the forest.

Rowanberry is walking besides Snow while Stumpytail is behind her. Littlepaw and Turtlepaw is besides Nightpaw, following behind the warriors. After a long trek, going under broken trees and passing small ponds, they arrive at a small hill cliff. There is trees on the top and the hill itself seem to be scoop out to become a den.

"Ask the elders last night if there was a place they find on their walks. A place to be a den in case we need it for sickness....or prisoners. This is where you will be staying Snow. Stumpytail and Roawnberry will take the first watch. Don't even think of trying to

escape. We know the territory and will catch you. I will be back soon." Brokenstar wait until Snow went inside. There is one nest there with three pieces of fresh kill. She glance back at him with surprise in her eyes.

"Had Tangleburr hunt while Littlepaw was telling us how they captured you. Also made a small nest as well. Rowanberry will escort you to make dirt. We aren't as dumb as you might think." Brokenstar gave a smirk as they left.

Nightpaw stare admiringly at Brokenstar as they went back the way they came. Brokenstar just found out he had a prisoner, had it all set up before leading her to her prison. He wish he can be like that. He just had that strength when everything a mess. Finding out Ratscar is related to a bloodclan cat, the attacks and preparing for more. Not to mention the missing Windclan cats and Thunderclan seemingly want to attack them too.

"How does he keep it together? How can I become that when I get into panic attacks? I must get stronger. I must be stronger." He murmur under his breath.

He stare at the ground as he walk, flinching when he felt Turtlepaw's fur brush his side. Looking up, he smile as he saw her glance of concern. He wasn't alone though. He have friends. It's nice to be reminded of that as he glance over his other side, seeing Littlepaw looking at him as well. They went inside the camp and Brokenstar jump up on the clan rock. Looking around, he saw that most of the clan is talking to each other. It as if they been waiting for Brokenstar to address them. Even Morningflower, Ashfoot is sitting outside the nursery, with Eaglekit playing with Brightflower.

"I'm sure the news has spread. We have one of theirs in our prison. Stumpytail and Rowanberry is guarding her. I want her guarded at all times. She isn't talking now but I'm sure we can get info out of her. I'm not going to sit here and lie about this situation. Seem we are in the middle of a war. I talked to Raggedstar and he said as much. Sorry Ashfoot and Morningflower, they didn't say anything about Windclan. Seem Bloodclan a bigger threat than we thought. Want everyone to be alert. For both Thunderclan and Bloodclan as we can't ignore the threats last Gathering. Want Snow guarded

while we carry out our usual patrols. Flintfang, you will be taking Stumpytail place tonight. Newtspeck, you will be taking Rowanberry. Want our apprentices to take extra battle practice. Blackfoot will take over command as I go talk to Ratscar. Dismissed!" Brokenstar jump down and left the camp to find Ratscar.

Badgerfang walk towards Nightpaw, motioning him to join him. He was hoping to find Wetpaw and Brownpaw to tell them about tonight, since they are often gone before the others. Before he left Littlepaw and Turtlepaw, he whisper to tell the others about tonight. They gave a nod before they separate.

"What was that about?" Badgerfang tilt his head as he finally join him.

"Just wanting to spend time together. We barely spoke after our time at the Moonstone." His voice had an even tone.

Badgerfang gave a knowing look. "Oh I see. We will hold your warrior's assessment after this situation is dealt with. Don't worry as I'm sure you will pass. First grab something to eat as we go to watch Yellowfang and Wetpaw at the Pine hollow. They are practicing advanced battle techniques." He smile, seeing the excitement in Nightpaw's eyes.

Nightpaw been wanting to see the advanced techniques but every time he asks, Badgerfang would say he wasn't ready. Grabbing a mouse, he quickly follow Badgerfang to the training area where he heard a large thump like a body getting slam on the ground. He saw Yellowfang rear up on her hind legs, grabbing Wetpaw around the neck with her forepaws and held him as they fell to the ground with him beneath her.

"Got to use your weight to your advantage. Also despite me not doing it, I'm in a perfect position to claw your undersides with my back paws." She let Wetpaw up as they got back into battle positions.

Wetpaw rush at her, dodging her paw strikes as he unbalance her. When she stood up on her hind legs, he uses his forepaws to hit her

on her underbelly, making her fall on her back. Before she can get up, he already held her down with his claw at her throat. Breathing heavily, she gave a nod to let him know he did good.

Nightpaw quickly ate his mouse, watching with great interest.

Badgerfang gave a small purr of amusement as he watch him. Nightpaw only seem to open up during battle practice. It took a while but Nightpaw fit in so well that others would have mistaken him as clanborn. Of course he would never reveal these thoughts to his apprentice. He even having less panic attacks due to his friendships with the other apprentices. If only he would admit his feelings to Turtlepaw. The whole clan can see it as he brightens up whenever she is around.

"Are you ready? Yellowfang is in charge of this training with Wetpaw. Pay close attention. These moves will save your life." Badgerfang said as Nightpaw pad towards them nervously.

"Badgerfang told me that you been dying to learn these techniques. Let me see your paw strikes against Wetpaw." Yellowfang flick her tail to motion to him to join them in the circle.

Of course, the advanced techniques probably used what they know and build on it. Nightpaw narrow his eyes as he faced him.

"This is going to be fun as I'm not going to be easy on you." Wetpaw mutter as he swipe a paw at him. Nightpaw quickly dodge despite not being ready.

"Wouldn't want you to be." Nightpaw swish his tail as he charge at Wetpaw. Seeing Wetpaw leaning left, he aim a paw strike to the right, trying to predict where he was going to be. Wetpaw duck and swipe a paw to knock him off his paws. He jump up but then got shove, making him fall and roll. Nightpaw spit out some dirt as he glare at him. Wetpaw had a smug expression as he wait for him to get back up.

"You are too careful, Nightpaw. And you are too reckless, Wetpaw. I seen all that I needed. Nightpaw, why did you strike beside him? You are thinking too much. Be in the moment. Wetpaw, you leave

too much open. When someone charge at you, don't just wait for them. You both got strengths. Good on the charge and I can see how hard you did that paw strike but you are a bit slow on changing your attack. Wetpaw, you are good at dodging but you use your weight too much. That shove wouldn't do anything to a heavier cat." Yellowfang step between them, stopping the fight.

"But you told me to use my weight more." Wetpaw look confuse as he watch Nightpaw sit down.

"Only when you grapple your opponent. Not when they are attacking you in full force. When you grapple them, then you use your weight to your advantage. Going to teach you how to get out of holds and how other clans attack." Yellowfang motion to Badgerfang to join the demonstration.

"Now watch carefully. This is a move that Thunderclan is very fond of. Badgerfang hold me down please." Nightpaw and Wetpaw left the hollow so they can watch with great interest.

Badgerfang place his whole weight on Yellowfang, making sure she can't move.

"When you pin down your opponent, you are supposed to let them run away right? After all we don't need to kill to win our fights. But Thunderclan like to use that to their advantage. They act like they give up but then...." In a burst of power, Yellowfang toss Badgerfang off her back and attack fast, pining him instead. "This is a basic move but Thunderclan uses it every chance they get. We use it but some cats forget about it, thinking it has no place on the battlefield." She got off of Badgerfang, letting him get up.

"That isn't all. Thunderclan cats like to tuck their tails so we can't grab it. They also slick down their fur, trying to seem weaker than they are. Tigerclaw is the only cat who don't do this. But his huge claws give him a powerful swipe. They also aim for our ears, tails and legs the most. To counter this, we keep our ears flat against our heads and keep moving. Be aware of your surroundings."

"What about rogues? I only fought one and he just do whatever. Very unpredictable." Nightpaw asks with a flick of his tail tip.

"Trained warriors are more of a threat than some rogues. Focus on one problem at a time. That your problem, Nightpaw. You try to do everything at once." Wetpaw sigh as he glance at him.

His fur bristle but he knew Wetpaw is right. Yellowfang gave them a few rounds of practice. Soon the others joined and they all got a bit better at fighting. Yellowfang even taught them how to take on multiple enemies in case they were surrounded and team moves. Nightpaw grin when he teamed up with Turtlepaw. It seem she saw his weakness and use her strength to overcome any blind spots. Turtlepaw was the decisive movements that he lack. She grin back as her paw strikes and fluid movement is fast enough to cover him. Wetpaw and Littlepaw seem to get in each other way during the match. They often trip over each other and Yellowfang stop the match.

"It seems you both trust each other deeply. That is why you both are good with each other. Keep practicing and you will become each other shadows. Haven't seen teamwork like that since Blackfoot and Brokenstar. They are a force to be reckoned with when they get serious." Yellowfang blink warmly at them. Her expression turn cold when she look at Littlepaw and Wetpaw.

"As for you two. I see you aren't so close despite being brothers. Though I am wise to team up someone small with someone large, your pride is getting in the way. Supposed to be a team. You both need extra practice. So every morning, we are going to be here until you both learn how to work together."

Wetpaw and Littlepaw both whine a bit as they catch their breath. Nightpaw purr as they left the hollow so Yellowfang can teach them more. Despite his feeling of accomplishment, there was an inkling of worry in the back of his mind. *What if this isn't enough? What going to happen if they get attacked from both Bloodclan and Thunderclan? What about the prophecy?* His tail twitch as he closes his eyes to calm himself.

"There you go worrying again. Relax and trust in us. We got this." Turtlepaw murmur to him quietly. He open his eyes and gave a weak smile.

She wish Nightpaw can stop worrying but that just who he is. Why can't he be as confident as she is? Shadowclan is the strongest clan due to the fact that they fight and can survive no matter the hardships. She remember hearing about the hard leaf bare where they had to hunt the rats just to eat. Even then, they gave it their all when Windclan try to fight them. She believe in her strength despite her bloodline. She going to prove that half clan is just as strong as full clan. Gullpaw don't worry about such things and tells her not to worry too.

But how can she when it's a saying that kittypet blood weakens the clans? She will prove it to everyone. If only cats didn't gossip about her and Nightpaw. He's a great cat but she want to be a strong warrior first. Like Darkflower and Russetfur. It's okay to have both. She glance at him and saw the way he focused on the lessons. She knew he don't think of her like that so she just push those emotions down. Maybe someday in the future but not now.

Chapter 14

Finally the day was done and most of the clan went to sleep earlier than they usually do. There is still patrols and guards due to Bloodclan yet Nightpaw still wanted to hold his meeting with the others. So he wait in his nest for the others to come in. Turtlepaw and Littlepaw is the next to come in.

"They are coming." Littlepaw said as they went to their nests. Nightpaw eyes widen when he saw that Turtlepaw nest is next to his. When did this happen? Before he was next to Littlepaw and Wetpaw. He quickly fix his face so the others wouldn't notice as the rest came in. Gingerpaw, Gullpaw, Wetpaw and Brownpaw were talking cheerfully about the training until they notice the looks on the other's faces.

"So what do you want to talk about, Nightpaw?" Wetpaw tilt his head as they all settled down in their nests.

"It about what I saw at the Moonstone. I was the only one allowed to touch the Moonstone due to not believing in Starclan. That when Sagewhisker came to me." He mew.

"You was visited by the last medicine cat?! It must be serious since I heard medicine cats only visit when they want to show you something. But you are supposed to discuss this with either Runningnose or Brokenstar. Not that I'm complaining." Littlepaw said in amazement. Everyone flinch since he was loud. Gullpaw poke her head out, seeing if anyone woke up. She gave them a nod to let them know it is okay.

"Shh! Do you want to wake the whole camp?" Brownpaw flick his tail on Littlepaw's mouth. "Please continue." Littlepaw glare and swipe the tail from his mouth.

"My father gave me a warning. Beware the claw that hunts the sun, for only shadows can smother it's fury. I think it has to do with Bloodclan. I wanted to solve this myself but like Wetpaw said

earlier, I tend to overthink." Nightpaw kneaded the ground with his tail tip twitching.

Bet everyone thinks he is crazy to try to solve it himself. Maybe they won't help him. After all this is a Starclan thing. Was it disrespectful to ask for help? It was given only to him. He stare at the others, hoping they would help him. He isn't as close to Brownpaw or Wetpaw since they are often training with their mentors and out at night.

"The claw. Sounds like a name. Shadows can only be us. But what about the sun? Maybe that's a name too. Or an orange cat." Gullpaw murmur as she thought out loud.

Yes! That what he been thinking too. The others look at Gullpaw, since she is often the smartest out of them all. Whenever Gingerpaw or the others have trouble with training, she can explain it so it makes sense. Nightpaw saw her look around and shrug her shoulders when she notice the attention.

"That all I got so far. Sorry." Turtlepaw wrap her tail around her to comfort her.

"It's a start. Maybe if we solve this, we can become warriors. I'm catching up despite my injuries but tired of being an apprentice. We should have been warriors but then all of this happened." Brownpaw growl softly, showing his frustration in his bristled fur along his spine.

"Orange cat. We need to talk to Snow. Only she knows her clan members and might point us in the right direction." Wetpaw directed the conversation back to the prophecy. Brownpaw shook himself to calm himself down.

"Why would she talk to us? We are the enemy. Can't ask Boulder because he will get suspicious and I have a feeling it's not good memories." Gingerpaw look around at the others thoughtfully.

"Hmm. I have an idea. I did overhear Russetfur and Boulder speaking while on patrol. We was hunting near the Windclan border and he seem to go into a deep thought about something. Russetfur

came over and ask if he was thinking about Barley. I came up when he said his farm is just over there. Wonder if he having trouble with Bloodclan too. I made myself look busy when they glance over." Mousepaw mew softly.

"That right. During a meeting, Boulder did mention that Barley was part of Bloodclan too. But he left before him. Do anyone know the way?" Nightpaw eyes shone now that they got a plan.

The three older apprentices nodded their head.

"Met Barley while doing night training with Wetpaw. Our mentors took us near the farm, saying we need to get used to different territories. Barley stepped out between the long grass, asking if we was training. He may be a loner but he knows about us clans. After they was done talking, he warned us about dogs loose at night and rats before heading back the way he came." Brownpaw gave a small yawn.

"So you three try to talk to Barley and let us know anything." Gingerpaw said in a small whisper, a determined glint in her eyes.

Nightpaw couldn't believe this. Not only did they come up with a plan, but the others all decided to help without much prodding from him. Now he must be patient because it is going to take a while.

"You are one of us, Nightpaw. Don't be surprise that we all want to help. I can see it on your face." Wetpaw purr softly as they went to their nests and laid down. He murmur thanks before wrapping his tail on his nose. The others purr as they slept.

At sunhigh, Nightpaw didn't need to glance at Brownpaw or Wetpaw's nests to see if they was empty. They always leave before he gets up. It feels so weird to depend on others. All his life he been alone or that help means owning others favors. He thought back on how others treated him. How Barry only let him be around due to winning the fight. He often mutters under his breath, thinking he couldn't hear him. Barry isn't exactly a friend though. His thoughts turn to his time in the clan. How welcoming Littlepaw was and despite Turtlepaw's rudeness at first, he finds himself close them. He

likes how he can sit with Mousepaw comfortably without saying a word. Or how Gullpaw can explain a hard lesson and don't mind how slow he is at getting it. He smiles as he remembers enjoying Volewhisper gossip or watching Yellowfang motherly instincts whenever they get hurt.

He don't mind Russetfur extra challenges that she gives him so he can know the other members more. Pointing out why be a warrior if you are separate from your clanmates? Those extra challenges is why he no longer asks questions and knows as much as a clanborn. This clan is a family and he is a part of it. He no longer hears anything about being a kittypet, even during border patrols, his clanmates stand up to others when they tease him about it. He growls softly as his thoughts turn to Darkstripe and Longtail. Whenever they meet on the borders, they always say something about it. It like they want to fight despite not daring to cross the borders. He pad outside before his thoughts can turn darker. He controls his temper but the rage is still there, deep in his pelt. He calm himself before heading to the prey pile.

"Hey Nightpaw! Come over here. Need to talk to you." A voice call out to him as he pick up a small bird. He sees Ratscar motion to him from near the warrior's den. He carry his bird over to him, wondering what is it he wanted. He notice that he seem to be a bit down but determination is in his eyes. Whatever it was, he is determine to see it through. He begin to eat as Ratscar told him that he knows that others are questioning his loyalty. He wanted to know if his daughters is having a hard time as well. He reassures Ratscar that there is nothing to worry about. Both Mousepaw and Gingerpaw are doing well and seem to be normal whenever they train together. He seem to be relieved and asks to keep this a secret between them. Him being a worrying father doesn't match the way others see him. Nightpaw understood as Badgerfang came out the leader's den.

"Good news! I talked to Brokenstar and the other mentors. He agreed with us that we should have your first warrior's assessment. The others will join us as well. There will be two parts. Day hunting and Night hunting. Go wake up Gingerpaw, Mousepaw, Turtlepaw and Gullpaw." Badgerfang noticed Ratscar, his tone is noticeably

colder as he said hello. Nightpaw glance between them, noticing Badgerfang eyes narrowing while Ratscar roll his eyes. Guess Ratscar worries wasn't for nothing,he thought as he quickly left them to wake the others. He look back, seeing the other mentors walk out of the den and towards Ratscar. Maybe he should wait until they had their argument, since none look happy to see him. He gently prodded everyone, waiting for them to open their eyes.

"We going to do our warrior's assessment. It's going to be a test on our day hunting and night hunting." He glance at Gingerpaw worriedly before turning his attention to the den's entrance.

"I'm okay. You don't have to worry about me anymore." Gingerpaw mew as loud voices sounded outside. They all went outside and sees Ratscar spitting at the others.

"Do they truly think our father is a traitor?!" Mousepaw said in the loudest tone they ever heard from her.

"At least they are open about it. I seen others not wanting to go on patrols with him, muttering about what if he leads them into a trap. It like since they know he is related to Snow, they think he is like her." Gingerpaw growls softly, her tail fluffing up. Mousepaw brush her side, calming her down.

"Don't make any sense. He is the same cat that they know. Yeah it is his sister but he isn't going to betray us for her. He barely knows her if their first meeting is anything to go by." Gullpaw mew as they walk towards their mentors.

"Leave our father alone!" Gingerpaw hiss as she and Mousepaw quickly stood between the warriors, in front of Ratscar, glaring at their mentors.

"Yeah! He....he no traitor." Mousepaw added.

Hopeheart look at the lashing tails of the sisters before turning away. Dawncloud came into the camp, rushing over once she saw the others facing each other.

"For Starclan's sake, Ratscar has no love for his sister. How long are

you going to punish him for his blood?! He already proved himself when he first got here. Why do you think that will change now?" She hiss as she lead Ratscar away from them. Both Gingerpaw and Mousepaw went with their parents as they left the camp.

This is no good. Today is supposed to be their warrior's assessment but with the mentors split on Ratscar, seems it not taking place at all. He can feel the anxiety start to rise up again but this time he clamp it down. He needs to help somehow. Hopeheart and Applefur left to go after them while the others glance at each other in shame.

"I guess even warriors act like kits sometimes." Turtlepaw said dryly. "So where should we hunt?"

"Anywhere in our territory. You have until moon rise. Can be in pairs or alone. Catch at least three prey. We will be waiting." Mossclaw answer as Badgerfang and Fernshade nodded.

Nightpaw share a glance with both Turtlepaw and Gullpaw before they ran outside. This is a chance to go find out the meaning of the prophecy.

"I'm going to hunt alone. Also see if both Gingerpaw and Mousepaw is okay. Good luck to you two." Gullpaw mew as she ran away.

How can I be so selfish? The clan is thinking more about Snow and Ratscar and here I am thinking about some vague prophecy from Starclan. That not important now. Might ask how Turtlepaw is handling everything.

Nightpaw's ear flick uneasily as he glance over at Turtlepaw padding beside him. They walk towards the marsh in silence for the most part.

"So that was something. Do you still trust Ratscar?" She asks.

"Why wouldn't I? He never changed. Still the same grumpy Ratscar that we both know. Unless you think he is going to change just because he found his long lost family member." His tail tip flick as he answer.

"Yes but it is his sister. Ratscar was a rogue who joined us, or that

what my mother told me. He trained so hard to fit in, even started as Ratpaw. Despite him being older. He was a rogue so maybe he goes back to being that way." Turtlepaw stop as she saw the disgust on Nightpaw's face.

"So you think that after all that hard work, he would go back?" Nightpaw stare at her with hurt in his eyes. "Its nice to know exactly how you think."

He shook his head as he push her aside to walk ahead. Turtlepaw ran ahead to block his path.

"You know that not what I meant." Her eyes wide, begging him to understand. "I'm saying maybe Snow will manipulate him somehow and we should look out for that. You know I don't think that way. I'm as much of an outsider like you are. I'm half clan. And maybe that don't mean much to you. I have kittypet blood and it weighs on me. I..." She start to choke up. His eyes widen as he watch her. *She seem so tough and that nothing bothers her. What kind of a friend is he when he don't noticed the pressure she puts on herself?*

He brush her side, feeling her shaking. "Is that why you think you need to do everything? Be perfect? Turtlepaw, you are a great member of your clan. So don't think that you are going to lose their trust just because of your blood. Believe in them and yourself. I believe in you." He gave her a lick on her forehead, feeling her shaking lessen as he did so. He never comforted anyone before so he just did what he felt is right. She lean on him, closing her eyes a bit before giving him a nod.

"Thanks. Guess I needed that. But what do you mean my clan? It your clan too. If you just disappear, the whole clan will miss you. Even me." She turn her head away as she spoke, padding forward a bit. "Now let hunt." She begin to sniff for prey scents.

She let out a loud hiss, Nightpaw's fur stood up as he heard movement around them. His back arch as cats came to surround them. Why is Bloodclan so deep in their territory?! He hiss as a familiar Ginger tom stood in front of them.

"Aww that was so sweet. Look like we got two prisoners. Spot, take

them to Snipe. Don't think of trying to fight. It's not going to end well for you. There is six of us and only two of you." Said Snag.

The rest of the cats begin to tighten the circle. Shadowclan never give up. Even when the odds is against us, Nightpaw thought as he quickly look around. That when he thought he saw a black and white tail tip sticking up behind the Bloodclan cats. Was that Badgerfang?

Nightpaw and Turtlepaw nod at each other as they begin to fight together like they trained. He swipe his claws on the side of a tabby molly, being surprise when she return a paw swipe of her own. Was this rogue trained in a clan? He wonder as he dodge. He then grab her in a hold, clawing her underbelly before letting her run away. He look around, seeing Turtlepaw taking on a molly. She glance at Nightpaw and shook her head. Guess she didn't want his help. After taking on two more and chasing them away, he saw only Snag is left. Turtlepaw won both of her fights and join him. They hiss together and leap at him. He quickly ran away before they landed on him. Guess Wetpaw was right about trained warriors being a bigger threat than rogues.

"Don't you come back!" Turtlepaw hiss at his retreating form. They had a lot of battle wounds so they lean on each other as they slowly went back to camp. Badgerfang eyes widen at the state of them, calling for Runningnose quickly as he rush forward. So that wasn't Badgerfang he saw, Nightpaw thought as he was being check over. After giving their report on what happened, Blackfoot order them to rest as he sent patrols to check over the area. He told them that Brokenstar is out of the camp with a border patrol so he won't be back for a while. Maybe they should wait until Bloodclan is dealt with.

He curl together with his back against Turtlepaw near the apprentice den. *Are they ever going to be warriors? What if Bloodclan never leave them alone?* These thoughts begin to race in his mind. It is going to be okay. He felt purring from Turtlepaw and realize it was her way to calm him down. He lay his head on his paws, letting it calm him. There is no rush to be warriors.

Chapter 15

He don't know how long they been dozing but he open one eye when he smelt a new scent. Brokenstar came in with a black and white tom with blue eyes. is this the Barley he heard about? Seem Wetpaw and Brownpaw don't need to get him. Guess Brokenstar decided that we need his help so went to get him. He stretch, feeling the sting of his wounds on his pelt. Still can't believe they manage to win against that ambush. He sniff his pelt at all the cobwebs clinging on it. Runningnose did tell him he look like he belong to Shadowclan with all the battle scars he getting. He wish he had a thicker coat to protect against attacks but this just means he need to be faster with dodging. He prod Turtlepaw gently, not realizing she was already awake. They watch Brokenstar leading him to his den, motioning Boulder to join them.

"We have to get close enough to hear it." Turtlepaw whisper as she look around to see if anyone is watching. She led the way around the nursery when Blackfoot stop them.

"Brokenstar want you both into his den." He mew with amusement in his eyes. "As if that isn't where you two were sneaking off to.. Don't forget that we all was apprentices as well. Also as if it needed to be said but all warrior assessments is on hold until we deal with this. Now go on." He watch them pad towards the den.

Walking inside, Nightpaw notice them all sitting with their tail curl around their paws.

"This is Barley. Boulder told me he also had connections to Bloodclan and he escaped them. Nightpaw and Turtlepaw was ambushed by Bloodclan cats. Please tell us exactly what happened and what you noticed." Brokenstar voice is a deep rumble as they sat down.

"They wasn't just attacking us. Seem they wanted to kidnap us and hold us somewhere. As you can see, we fought back fiercely. There was six of them. The orange tabby named Snag was the leader of

this attack." Turtlepaw mew as she glance at Nightpaw who nodded.

"One molly seem to be trained in warior techniques as she claw like we do. I believe that she might have joined one of the other clans and left." Nightpaw added. For once his tail is still and his voice is calm and steady.

"Make sense. Bloodclan would spy and see how clan cats fight and use those techniques themselves." Boulder mew softly as he glance at Barley who nodded.

"This doesn't sound like Scourge at all. Which means these are the rebellion. I heard whispers when I was a kit but nothing came of it. Scourge probably killed those leaders before anything can come of it. Be careful if you see two black and white toms as they are his enforcers. They are very deadly and never failed a kill order. I still have friends though haven't talk to them for a long time. Seem I need to reconnect." Barley said with a friendly blink at the two apprentices. "If they already ran off Windclan and attacking Shadowclan, it will only be a matter of time before they set their sights on my barn. That is one thing you clan cats and Bloodclan have in common. You both have a distaste of being around Twolegs."

"Thank you Barley. As always you are quite welcome among us. Don't hesitate to visit if you have any more ideas or news. We will chase out these rogues on our own." Brokenstar mew as he stood up.

"No thank you Brokenstar. Now I will be on the lookout for them. Well I don't want to overstay my welcome. Nice to meet you two." Barley stood up to leave with Boulder leading the way. *If he don't ask now, it might be too late*. Nightpaw thought as he realize he was leaving.

"Wait. Is there a cat named Claw in Bloodclan? Snag said something about bringing us to Claw." Nightpaw tail twitch as Barley turn to look at him. Turtlepaw look like this was nothing new to her as they wait for his answer.

"Yes there is. Claw is a brown tom with very long claws. He joined before I managed to escape with my sister. Be careful as he loves to use those claws. Good thing Shadowclan apprentices seem to be too much for Bloodclan cats."

As he left, Nightpaw and Turtlepaw glance at each other. Well that one thing they got. Before Brokenstar can ask, a lot of noise sounded outside.

"What is happening now?" He mutter before leaving with them following behind him. Ratscar nearly run into him, seemingly out of breath. Nightpaw watch Boulder and Barley leave before turning his attention to Ratscar.

"Sorry. My family and I fought off more of those rogues. Ran to get help. They are on the Windclan border. Need to go back there!" Ratscar exclaim before tuning to run back out.

"Blossomsky, Tangleburr, Tallpoppy, Newtspeck! Go with him. We need to check the other borders. Blackfoot, who is guarding Snow?" Brokenstar call out. They ran after Ratscar as Brokenstar turn his attention to them. "Need you two to protect the camp." They just nodded as he look over at Blackfoot.

"Deerfoot and Russetfur. This might just be a distraction. A way to thin our numbers so Snow can escape." Blackfoot look worriedly as Brokenstar glance around.

"True. Only elders and queens are here." He mew as he saw Ashfoot and Morningflower poking their head out of the nursery.

"Just because we are old doesn't mean we can't fight. Don't you youngsters worry about us." Ashfur mew as they stretch out their claws.

"Very well. Blackfoot, you are with me. We are both going to Snow." As soon as they left, Nightpaw realize just how quiet the camp is.

He begin pacing back and forth, glancing at the entrance every so often. Turtlepaw sat down, just watching the sides of the camp, her

ears perk. The elders stood outside, their fur bristling as the queens duck back inside. Ashfur, Nightpelt and Hollyflower stood in front of the nursery, protecting the entrance. He felt so nervous, waiting for anything to happen. He heard Runningnose come out of his den with leaf wraps. This was just like the badger attack except he didn't know it was happening. There must be battles happening all over their territory. His claws slid in and out as his pelt bristle when he finally heard movement near the entrance. This is it. Glance around, seeing the elders guarding the nursery put him at peace.

He felt his heart thudding in his chest as time seem to slow down. He breathe deeply as he smelt the scent of Shadowclan. In rush a flurry of his clanmates, all bloody and torn to shreds. Pelts begin melting together as he look around. The space seem to close around him as he can't breath. Not now. He hasn't had one for so long that he thought it was over. Closing his eyes, he dug his claws in the ground to steady himself. Breath in, breath out. Feeling Runningnose nudging him, he open his eyes, eating the thyme he set in front of him. The dizziness wore off as the herbs begin their work.

"Need you to help like last time. Are you steady enough?" He mew softly in his ear. He can only nod as he look around. He saw that his mind was playing tricks on him. That everyone had wounds but they are okay and just need some care.

Before he can help, Brokenstar came in with Snow on his back. Runningnose ran to her to check her over as Blackfoot stumble in, with shock in his eyes. What did he see?

"They wasn't trying to rescue her. They wanted to kill her." Was all Brokenstar said as Runningnose took her from his back. Nightpaw grab web, noticing that both Brownpaw and Littlepaw is helping Runningnose with Snow while he help the others. Seem like everyone is in camp.

After helping everyone, Nightpaw lay down, exhausted as Runningnose finish his work. Snow was the worst, looking like she been attacked by foxes and badgers instead of cats. Throughout everything, Nightpaw notice that everyone is in a happy mood, meaning they must have won their fights despite the injuries. He

look up as Brokenstar jump onto the Clanrock, raising his tail for silence. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw that Gingerpaw, Mousepaw, and Dawncloud was close to Snow with Ratscar.

"We may have won this battle but we still need to be on alert. This is just their first phase to tired us out. I met the leaders named Snipe and Claw. As you can see, they wanted to kill Snow to keep their plans a secret. She fought with us which is a surprise. Once she awakes, I know she will help us after their betrayal. Due to the battles, prey will be scarce during the day. Which means hunting must be at night." He growls.

"So when do we bring the fight to them?! I'm tired of being on the defensive." Swampcloud asks as he glare at Snow.

"We don't need Snow help. We can hunt them." Whitethroat added.

"What if they got more allies? Have you thought about that? No? Then this meeting is dismissed." Brokenstar hiss as he jump down.

Nightpaw watch as both Swampcloud and Whitethroat went to another group of disgruntled warriors near the elders' den. On the other side of the clearing, there is warriors who seem to agreed with Brokenstar decision to being cautious. Looking for his friends, he saw them go towards Snow until Runningnose wave them away.

"I can't work with everyone crowding us! Will let you know when she wakes up." Runningnose said as he motion Tallpoppy to help him with carrying her into the medicine den.

"Go rest and at moonise I will wake you for your next night lesson." Nightpaw jump a bit as Badgerfang is behind him.

Looking up, Nightpaw saw the sun is going down. Besides he know everyone need a rest after all the fighting they did.

"Alright." He mew as he pad towards his nest, hoping there won't be anything else happening as the clan recovers it strength.

Chapter 16

Nightpaw toss and turn as his dreams turn dark, eyes watching him, fangs flashing as he ran. He watch as cats made from shadows ran pass him, running from something. He heard his clan voices, rising in panic and he lower his ears as it was very loud. You was supposed to save us! he kept hearing as he turn to run from the cats made of blood. It didn't take a genius to know what was happening. Shadowclan is getting run out of their home like Windclan. He felt claws squeezing from all sides. There is too many of them and they bury him. He couldn't breathe.

"Nightpaw!" A paw shook him as he quickly jump up, tossing his nest around.

"Bad dream?" Badgerfang asks as he watch Nightpaw shake the pine needles off of his pelt.

"Yes." His tone is curt as he begin to pull his nest together and groom himself.

"Come on, the others are waiting." Badgerfang left as he finished. Others? Looking around, he realize he is alone. He shook his head to get the dream out of his mind as he went to the prey pile to grab something to eat. Badgerfang was waiting at the entrance as he finish eating, shoving the dream down the best he can as he pad towards him, licking the blood from his lips.

"So what are we going to do tonight?" He asks as they walk through the forest.

"We are going to learn how to navigate the forest while blind, learn how to communicate without speaking and do a battle patrol training. It is very different at night than the day. Badgerfang lead him towards a clearing with few bushes around. He saw Turtlepaw, Mousepaw, Gingerpaw and Gullpaw waiting with their mentors.

They all look like they just woke up so he is glad he wasn't late by much. He went to sit between Mousepaw and Gingerpaw as Badgerfang went towards the mentors.

"now that we are all here, we are going to walk the forest with our eyes closed. Because the moon won't always be there to shine the light on us. You have to learn how to be without sight. We are Shadowclan, we travel the darkest paths without issues. This is a pure Shadowclan skill." Mossclaw mew as he pace back and forth.

"Due to circumstances, we have to speed up your training. You aren't supposed to learn this until the end of your apprenticeship. But you all are doing so well that Brokenstar ordered us to do this lesson." Hopeheart purr as she look at their excited expressions.

"We are going to do this, night battle and mimicry." Applefur added as she let out a loud hoot, sounding exactly like an owl.

Nightpaw's eyes widen as he watch her. He can't wait to learn these skills. Can see himself being a full warrior, teaching these to his own apprentice. Wait. Him having an apprentice? Way to get ahead of himself.

"Nightpaw will walk around the marsh, and Turtlepaw will walk towards the Windclan border." Mossclaw was mewing when he focus his attention again.

"Remember keep your eyes closed. Your mentors will be besides you to make sure of it." Nightpaw watch as the others left, leaving him with Badgerfang.

He took a deep breath to calm himself before closing his eyes. He felt the wind blowing and smelt the marshes. His whiskers kept twitching as he let his senses go outward. Is this what it like to be blind? Of course he heard of blind cats in Twolegplace. They are often white cats with blue eyes. Or maybe he thinking of deaf cats. He seen them walking around with no issues, even fighting the bullies. He begin walking towards the marsh. Why did Mossclaw give him the marsh? Was it a way to face his fears? He can feel the ground getting soft and stop walking. Bending down, he sniff the ground until he found the edge. He dip a paw in the water before

shaking it off.

"So I just have to walk around it?" He asks, knowing Badgerfang is on his right side. He can feel his presence. Maybe his abuse from the Twoleg kits did teach him something.

"You are doing better than I expect. Your eyes didn't open once." Badgerfang said with awe in his voice.

"Just instinct." He mutter before starting to walk.

Sure he can tell Badgerfang on how he dodge rooms, feeling the Twolegs kits before they saw him. But he didn't want to bring the mood down. After all he is out and he don't have to think about it ever again. He listen to the reeds knocking into each other, the buzzing of insects and the smell of marsh flowers. His anxiety lessen as he continue walking, feeling a certain amount of calm settling in him. This is what it's supposed to feel like. He kept his eyes closed while walking the entire length of the marsh.

Other clans only saw a dirty muddy territory, thinking that Shadowclan embodies the darkness within. They don't see the flowers, the harmony between the bugs and frogs. Listening to the frogs singing, hearing the lizards scamper on the rocks. They don't see the beauty especially at night. He overheard other apprentices having to sneak out at night while Shadowclan is expected to go out. It is why they wake at sunhigh and train late into the night.

He sat down after coming back to the starting point. He did trip a bit because of dips in the ground. Dips that wasn't there before. Of course it wasn't going to be easy. After two dips, he slow down, felt the ground before walking forward. His whiskers and tail twitch as he felt the space between the trees and he could sense the dips once he got used to them.

"You can open your eyes now." Fernshade mew. He was startled since he didn't know the others was back. *Seems I still need to work on sensing other cats.* He thought to himself as he rub his eyes with his paws. His sight seem blurry before coming back into focus.

"That was hard." He mew as he watch them open their eyes as well.

Badgerfang report to Mossclaw on how Nightpaw did.

"Seem only Nightpaw and Mousepaw did the entire exercise without peeking. Good job. And yes we can tell when you are peeking." Mossclaw mew is stern, looking disappointed at the others.

"We could have twisted an ankle due to the dips." Turtlepaw glare back mutinously.

"That is true. There wasn't dips before." Gullpaw agreed. "Besides it is scary because we can't see. What if we ran into a fox or a badger?"

"That is what we are here for. Everything is planned for safety. It's okay if this is a bit much for you. You can tell us if you want to back out." Applefur mew while looking them over.

"I'm not backing out. We can do this. With enough training, it won't be scary anymore." Gingerpaw said while glancing at the others.

"Besides we have to learn it anyway. Better sooner than later. These lessons are cool." Mousepaw eyes shine as she spoke up.

"We all had to do these training exercises. Don't you feel more connected to the territory afterwards? Like it is more safe after walking around without sight?" Fernshade asks, purring when they all nodded.

The mentors look at each other, coming to an unspoken agreement.

"Next is learning pawspeak. This is what we use when we fight at night. After all you don't want your enemies hearing your plans. Going to start with three phrases. Hello, goodbye and come here." Hopeheart was moving her paws as she spoke.

Nightpaw tilt his head in confusion. There a way to talk without using your voice? He learnt about tail signals but this is something much more elaborate.

"This is how deaf cats can communicate in Shadowclan. A deaf cat was born and came up with pawspeak. It been passed down through generations despite not having a deaf cat in the clan. Soon we

decide to use this for night battles." Fernshade mew as she look over at Hopeheart. "Hopeheart is one of the best at pawspeak, even making new signs and teaching the rest of us. Listen well for it make save you if you lose your hearing. Anything can happen."

Hopeheart sat down, holding up her forepaws. She move one paw from left to right. Over the course of the night, they all learnt many different signs. Took a bit to learn how to use each sign. Nightpaw kept making the mistake of signing day instead of night while Turtlepaw making the mistake of sun and moon. After a while, their mentors decided to give them a mock battle. Turtlepaw, Mousepaw and Gullpaw was on one side of the clearing while Nightpaw and Gingerpaw is on the other. It is up to Nightpaw and Gingerpaw to save Fernshade from the others. The other mentors stood on the side to watch.

Gingerpaw look up while they was behind a tree, out of view from the others. It is so quiet that they couldn't talk since they would have been heard. She stomp the ground to gain Nightpaw attention as he was watching the other team, then look back up. Nightpaw look up as well, noticing that a cloud seem to be drifting in towards the moon. Gingerpaw put her paws together to sign moon, then wiggle her tail to mean the cloud. Then she push outwards with her forepaws to sign to move out. Nightpaw nodded as he flick his tail to the left. Asking if he should attack Mousepaw that was on the left instead of Turtlepaw on the right. Gullpaw was in the middle. She nod back as they wait for their moment.

As soon as the moon is covered, the clearing went completely dark. The others let out mews of shock and surprise as Nightpaw ran left. He went silently, tripping Mousepaw, holding her head down into the ground so she couldn't talk. He stomp his back leg to signal Gingerpaw. Gingerpaw jump on Turtlepaw first, knocking her into Gullpaw, tangling them up as she stood on top of them.

"Well done you two. Using the sudden darkness as a way to surprise your enemies. With them being distracted, it is too easy to gain the upper paw." Fernshade said as they let them up.

"Wasn't expecting the moon to go out. That isn't fair." Gullpaw mutter as Turtlepaw let out a playful hiss at Gingerpaw.

"Nightpaw held me down so I couldn't warn you. That was pretty smart though I hate the taste of dirt." Mousepaw pointed out as she spit the dirt from her mouth.

"That was Gingerpaw idea. She was the one who noticed the cloud was going towards the moon so she planned to ambush at the right time." Nightpaw said while scratching his side with his back paw. The moon shine again as the other mentors walk up.

"Using your surroundings, including the sky is a basic skill. Seem one of you should have been watching the sky and predict that when guarding." Mossclaw said while they clean themselves up.

"You weren't so good at that while we trained." Badgerfang playfully shove him before turning his attention to them.

"Now for the last lesson of tonight. Mimicry. Applefur is the best at that." He said as she step up.

"First you need to listen to how real owls and other animals sound. Going to take a lot of practice and not everyone can do it first try. Took me many moons to be as good as I am." She said as they listen to the hoot of an owl in the night.

"Got to clear your voice. Feel it deep within. Only when you think you are ready, let it out." Applefur raise her head so they can see the movement of her throat before letting out a hoot.

Nightpaw close his eyes to focus everything on his throat. He can only mew. He dug his claws into the ground. He can do this. Hearing the others, they was sounding out weak hoots. It felt like he is coughing up a hairball but soon he let out a small hoot. His ears twitch as he heard the owl again. Chittering his teeth, he tried again. Guess that the best he can do for now.

The forest begin to lighten as the sun begin to rise.

"That is it everyone. Time to rest as the sun is coming up. Keep practicing and you will improve. Don't do just the owls. Try the birds, frogs and even mice. I did hear that kittypets can bark like a dog too." Applefur mew as Nightpaw open his eyes. He let out a

yawn, realizing how late it is. Guess he should get used to this, staying up until dawn training. No wonder both Wetpaw and Brownpaw are often out at night.

They begin walking back to camp, barely able to keep their eyes open when a black and white cat walk out from behind a tree. Before the cat can react, Mossclaw jump on him, holding him down. He recognize the cat as Scraps, the bloodclan cat who was part of the ones hurting his brother.

"Please, I come in peace." He mew as Mossclaw hiss before letting him up. "Ask them. I could have attack them during the ambush but I didn't." He point towards both Nightpaw and Turtlepaw.

Turtlepaw gave a hiss before he spoke. "So you were the tail I saw. I guess you want something?" His fur is bush out, tail whipping back and forth. All he need is an order and he will turn this cat into his namesake.

"Snipe and Claw didn't like that I didn't attack. Got a new patch because of that." He show them a bald patch on his left side. "I want protection. Now they are talking about kidnapping kits. I didn't join up for that. I want to leave but they are powerful and ruthless. They killed a cat for wanting to leave. Also my sister Gremlin is there. I know she is only there because of me." He mew as he glance at them pleadingly.

"What kits?" Applefur asks as she step closer. Nightpaw slick down his fur as he can tell he is telling the truth.

"Thunderclan kits. Their plan is to kidnap their kits, put it on your clan and watch you two tear each other apart. Going to be in three days. They say they need to wait for their contact. I'm not a bad cat! I don't want kits to get hurt. If I told Thunderclan, they would kill me where I stand. Please believe me." Scraps lower himself, bowing his head.

"Got a better idea. Scraps. You stay there and keep the kits safe. We will deal with Thunderclan. Is there more who don't want to be a part of this? Rally them if you can. Also tell your sister. If this is a trap, you should never show your face ever again." Mossclaw tone is

a deep growl. Scraps look at him, gave a fast nod before running away.

"Don't forget to wash our scent off of you." Fernshade hiss as they watch him leave. Scraps' tail flick to show he heard before disappearing from sight.

"Now to camp as you all need to rest. After all we got three days." Applefur look at the apprentices with concern.

Three days. Only three days of peace. Nightpaw look at his friends and saw they all look grim. They can survive, they have to. As they walk in, he look at the peaceful camp, hoping his vision of blood warriors chasing them out won't come true.

Chapter 17

"I'm just saying that they will attack us if we tell them." An exhausted mew sounded as Nightpaw slowly woke up.

He growls as the voices became louder, opening one eye at the response.

"Despite them being our rivals and enemy, I think we should warn them due to the warrior code and the kits that would be in danger!" Another mew hisses.

Guess Brightflower and Russetfur is at it again. He stretch as he let out a yawn. It been two days since Scraps warn them about Bloodclan plan to set Thunderclan against them. The clan is split on warning Thunderclan. One side said that they will take it as a threat and attack them while making them look weak, while the other side say it's the right thing to do according to the warrior code. That they must help their neighbors against Bloodclan, even if their reputation takes a hit. Brokenstar didn't make a decision yet which is why most of the senior warriors and elders been arguing. Every sunhigh, he can hear Yellowfang and Swampcloud talking in hush tones. See the glares the elders send to Tangleburr, Russetfur and Boulder who don't want to warn them.

"Nightpaw." Littlepaw pad into the den, looking back as if worry if anyone saw him.

"I'm up. Did Badgerfang ask for me?" He begin to groom himself as Littlepaw shook his head.

"Brokenstar made a decision. You and Runningnose are going to Thunderclan camp He believe by sending you two, Thunderclan will understand that we want to help them. But he isn't telling the clan as this is a secret mission. Told me to tell you. Just act normal." Littlepaw walk out before he can respond.

Of course he can guess why Brokenstar gave him the mission. He is

the kittypet turned clan cat so other clans probably don't see him as a threat. But not to tell the clan? He always include the clan into his plans. Is the split that bad? He padded out and bump into Volewhisper, who glare at him.

"Watch where you are going." He hissed before joining Blossomsky for a patrol.

Volewhisper was usually an easygoing cat but now he is angry and tense. As they left, Brokenstar call a clan meeting. Before he can join the others, he saw Runningnose motion to him from the corner of his eyes. He saw Brokenstar meet his eyes, gave a little nod before he begin talking. All he caught was to strengthen the thorn barriers around their camp before leaving through the tunnel, heading straight to the Thunderpath.

"I'm sure Littlepaw fill you in. He's the one watching Snow right now. She is steady and just need to rest. Brokenstar know that most of the clan won't approve of this so he telling them the plan now." Runningnose said as they stop at the Thunderpath. Nightpaw look back and forth as the monsters race by. He knead the ground as they wait.

"Do you think the clan will be back to normal soon?" He asks after a few minutes. "It just that everyone is so tense and bad tempered. Why is it so bad to help others?"

"Shadowclan isn't known for being nice. Our reputation leaves much to be desire yet it keeps us safe. It's why we seem to only attract attention from rogues and loners. We are seen as the toughest and battle hungry clan. Riverclan is known as lazy and slow, Windclan is known as swift and skinny, and Thunderclan is known as friendly and loyal to the code." Runningnose pad across the Thunderpath and cross the boundary. Nightpaw wait a few heartbeats before following.

"Remember that medicine cats can cross the boundaries when we need to. Stay close since we don't know when it is happening." Nightpaw gave a nod as they continue.

Looking around, he saw how bright the forest was compared to

theirs. The trees are mostly birch or oak while theirs are pine. Leaves littered the ground as birds sung and Nightpaw shook a paw that had a leaf stuck to it. Soon they heard paws stomping towards them, like a chase. Runningnose shove him into a bush and hid with him. The cats ran towards the Thunderpath despite no one chasing them. His eyes widen as he thought he heard kits mewing, look at Runningnose face and saw that they were too late.

They wait a few minutes before leaving and running back to their camp. No words spoken as they rush back. They burst through the tunnel, out of breath.

"Too late." Was all Runningnose could get out. The camp was a flurry of activity, stopping when they burst through.

"They got the kits. Didn't want to confront them so we don't put the kits in danger." He continued as Brokenstar pad towards them, issuing orders to continue strengthening the thorn barriers around the camp. He asks Ashfoot and Morningflower if they want to be revealed but they shook their heads.

"They would see us as prisoners instead of guests." Morningflower said as she pad out of the nursery. Ashfoot had Eaglekit in her mouth as Tangleburr led the way to the other camp. Brightflower follow, having Morningflower lean on her as they climb the hill to leave without being seen. With them gone, Nightpaw saw how fortified the walls of the camp seem to be. Yellowfang and Rowanberry closed the gap that the others went through, dragging a bramble vine with thorns across it.

Was this what the others been doing while he and Runningnose went to Thunderclan? Looking around, he saw the signs and that everyone seem to be working well together. The tension in the camp is gone now. Or maybe it is the oncoming threat that made everyone pull together. Runningnose quickly went to grab herbs to heal the many scratches while Brokenstar told him to go hunt and keep a lookout for Thunderclan.

Nightpaw went back out and hunt along the Thunderclan border. After catching two birds and a mouse, he heard the sounds he been waiting all day. Sounds of heavy pawsteps padding into his

territory. Shadowclan knows how to walk without a sound so he knew this must be the Thunderclan patrol. They took their sweet time, he thought as he look up at the sky. It is close to sunset so he knew they probably figured out the kits are missing. They appeared in front of him as he stood up. It is a small patrol lead by Whitestorm, with Darkstripe and Runningwind, Longtail, Firepaw, Sandpaw and Dustpaw. They stop as he put down his prey.

"You are trespassing on Shadowclan territory." He mew confidently. "I will fight if I have to."

"Calm down, Nightpaw. We want to talk to Brokenstar." Whitestorm said with a glare.

"That a big patrol for just a talk." A voice mew as Nightpaw smirk. Boulder, Fernshade, Cinderfur, Stumpytail and Wetpaw surrounded the Thunderclan patrol, making them jump.

"Where did you put our kits?!" Darkstripe hiss as he glare at them. "Our kits were kidnapped and we smelt Shadowclan scent on our territory. We know you have them." He crouch down, his tail lashing as he prepared to lunge. Before he can, Longtail step in front of him, blocking him.

"Enough Darkstripe." He growl as he look at Nightpaw. He straighten up as he match Darkstripe actions. Boulder gave him a disapproving look before he lead the way. He grab his prey as they lead the patrol to the camp.

Walking in, he saw how the clan look like nothing is wrong and Brokenstar is lying on top of the clan rock. As they walk, he did notice Firepaw trying to get his attention but he ignored it in front of the others. This isn't a gathering and he didn't want others thinking he would be friendly with the other clans. After dropping the fresh kill, he walk to the other side of the clearing where Littlepaw and Mousepaw were. Their faces is perfect masks as they watch Fernshade jump up to whisper into Brokenstar ear, acting like they didn't know why Thunderclan is here.

"Kits missing? You think we will kidnap kits? Enough of the accusations! Look around, I'm sure you would have heard your kits

by now. We don't have them." Brokenstar stood up as Fernshade jump down, his fur bristling and tail twitching.

"Sorry Brokenstar. It just we smelt Shadowclan on our territory so we..." Runningwind start to explain, his ears down.

"So just by scent you think we want your kits? What reason do you think we want them for?" Yellowfang asks as she step forward with a lash of her tail.

Nightpaw watch as they glance at each other. Guess they didn't think of it. Just smelt Shadowclan and went to attack if they found their kits here. After all, Shadowclan is known as the dark heart of the forest and they are evil. He roll his eyes as he sat down, seeing the guilt flash on the Thunderclan cats faces.

"Lucky for your clan, we been dealing with troublesome rogues so maybe they took your kits. As a way to make trouble between our clans." Blackfoot spoke up with a respectful tone as he glance at Brokenstar.

Nightpaw smile as he saw exactly what happened. Blackfoot gave them an out without seeming weak in front of them. This way, they can manipulate Thunderclan against the rogues, killing two birds with one move. They couldn't face the rogues by themselves due to the unknown number, but with the strength added with Thunderclan, they can finally get rid of them. All without being seen as weak by them.

"We have a plan to get rid of these rogues but now with the kits, it is dangerous. Why don't you fill us in on what happened." Brokenstar said as he sat down with his tail calmly by his paws.

The Thunderclan cats sat down as well, looking at Whitestorm. "We was attacked. We fought them off but it clearly was a distraction. After making sure everyone is okay, we noticed that Frostfur kits was missing. Bluestar had Lionheart stay behind due to his injuries. Spottedleaf and Ravenpaw is working while she sent us to investigate. So we found faint Shadowclan scent near the nursery and follow it here. We are fools I must admit. The scent smelt like they rubbed it on their pelt, now that I think about it." Whitestorm

explain as they listen with grim faces.

"These rogues aren't normal. They call themselves Bloodclan and they been framing us. Apparently they know how the other clans sees us so they been causing issues. We been fighting them off though. Shadowclan need no help with rogues." Brokenstar's voice is clipped, as he stare down at them.

"They are behind the Carrionplace." A soft voice mew as everyone heads turn towards the medicine den. Snow step out slowly, her injuries clear for everyone to see.

"The strong smell cover our presence....their presence. You should go quickly. Bloodclan don't treat kits kindly." Runningnose went to her side to look her over.

"Boulder, you should lead this patrol. Nightpaw, Wetpaw, Littlepaw, Ratscar, Yellowfang, Russetfur and Wolfstep. The rest should protect this camp. Work together with Thunderclan. Getting the kits out safely should be the first priority. Show them that messing with the clans is the wrong thing to do!" Brokenstar growl as the patrol gather with Thunderclan.

"This is clearly a first. Thunderclan working with Shadowclan." Dustpaw mutter as Nightpaw pass by him.

He ignore him as he look at Firepaw. He look different than when they met at the gathering. He had scars on his pelt, making him see that he been in some battles before this. Yet his eyes shone in welcome as he stood next to him.

"Hi Nightpaw. That was very intense. Can't wait to fight these rogues. Every battle is a lesson. That is what Tigerclaw taught me. Been training with him, Longtail and Darkstripe." He mew as they begin to run towards the Carrionplace.

"Surprise they allow you to come." Nightpaw didn't want to appear too friendly. He can hear the soft kittypet taunts if he did. The sun shone down on them, lighting up Firepaw's pelt like a brand of fire. Nightpaw's eyes widen at how good he looks.

"I ask to come. Tigerclaw was actually on my side and told Bluestar that it will be good experience." His voice drop low as he glance to make sure he wasn't overheard. "I befriended these kits. Told them stories. The queens were the first to accept me. Didn't care where I came from. I liked watching them."

"We will get them back. Shadowclan will make sure of it." He hiss softly. Flashes of memories went through his mind. Remembering how he catch a glimpse of Eaglekit whenever Ashfoot leaves to stretch her legs. Eaglekit is bright and curious when he peeks out from the nursery. He may not be good around kits but he will do his best to protect them. He noticed that both Wolfstep and Russetfur had split from the patrol. They sign to Yellowfang that they was going ahead. Thunderclan hadn't noticed due to them having trouble with running through their territory.

"I don't know why Shadowclan cares about kits. I heard that you guys trained your kits before six moons." Nightpaw roll his eyes as he heard a condescending meow behind them, taking him out of his thoughts.

Sandpaw caught up to them as they stop to catch their breath. He ignore her as he look up to see the sun dip low and the forest begin to turn dark. This is perfect since the rogues wouldn't expect them to come at night. Only problem is showing their special skills with their companions.

"We should rest here for now. The carrionplace is nearby and we need a plan of attack." Yellowfang said as she look at Thunderclan. They was breathing more heavily and Nightpaw purr a bit, enjoying both Longtail and Darkstripe struggles. They made sure to take the driest routes so they won't get their paws wet, but seem they struggle even with that.

"Hey where did the others go?" Darkstripe ask as he noticed that Russetfur and Wolfstep wasn't with them.

Took them a while to notice. How many cats disappear on their patrols? Nightpaw wonder as Darkstripe glare at them.

"They gone ahead. With the sun down, we are in our element. So

might want to follow our lead Thunder cats." Ratscar said with a snort.

"Don't think we going to listen to you, Shadow cat. How do we know you aren't just going to turn on us? We aren't stupid." Darkstripe growls.

"Like how you thought we had your kits despite no reason for us to do so?" Yellowfang pointed out, seeing both Whitestorm and Runningwind flinch.

They begin to argue amongst themselves, going over how Shadowclan is often seen as evil despite only doing anything that other clans have done. Nightpaw ignore this and walk towards the other apprentices. His eyes widen as he watch Sandpaw decide to sit besides Firepaw instead of Dustpaw. Dustpaw eyes narrow as he saw this. Wetpaw and Littlepaw sat opposite of them, moving aside for him. They look at the warriors arguing and shook their heads.

"Let's at least work together for the kits. We don't have to like each other." Dustpaw sneer as he look at both Firepaw and Nightpaw.

"What do you got against kittypets? We both been in the clans for moons, and yet I feel your disgust. You just look at both me and Firepaw, leaving out my friends despite us all being from Shadowclan." Nightpaw glare at Dustpaw, his fur bristling and tail tip twitching as he dug his claws into the ground, controlling his anger.

"He just saying that maybe your hesitation will be a problem. Kittypets are known for being soft. In his own way, he is trying to make sure you are ready to kill if we need to." Sandpaw said while glancing at Dustpaw.

Do you really think we would believe that? Like I said, we both been in the clans far longer than being kittypets. So any softness wouldn't be there." Nightpaw spat.

"They have five kits. How many are yours?" Wolfstep said, interrupting any response that Sandpaw might have. The Thunderclan cats all jump as they walk towards them, not making

any sound.

"We seem to outnumber them as well. Claw is a big brown tom with long claws. He's the leader. We take him out, the others might scatter. We got inside help. Overheard some cats not agreeing with his methods. Seem by kidnapping kits, he gone too far." Russetfur added.

"We are only missing four. Frostfur's kits like I said before. We are saving all of them. Maybe we can find the mother after getting them out of danger. Here what we do. We wait for them to fall asleep and sneak in." Whitestorm said as everyone gather around.

"And of course Thunder wants to boss us around. Didn't you hear me when I said we got inside help? There are two cats guarding the kits and they are on our side. They are both patchy white and black tortoiseshells. A molly and a tom. Here is the real plan. Whitestorm, you and your cats create a distraction while we get the kits. They are going to be expecting you but they aren't expecting us to work together. So just head right in while we do what Shadowclan do best." Russetfur said while drawing a map on the ground to show everyone what the rogues' camp look like. It is much smaller than a clan camp, only having places to sleep and eat fresh kill. They are far enough away from the carrionplace so no rats will attack them yet close enough for the stink to cover them.

As the Thunderclan cats got closer to the map, Nightpaw, and the other Shadowclan cats padded back a bit. In one smooth motion, they left and disappear in the shadows of the forest as Whitestorm begin to speak.

"We agree with this plan. Darkstripe, keep your temper. Firepaw, Sandpaw and Dustpaw, follow our lead. Longtail and Runningwid, stay hidden. You will be our backup in case things go wrong. Whitestorm said.

Looking over, they saw that Shadowclan has disappear. Nightpaw watch from the shadows as they look around before heading to the rogue's camp.

"Have to admit, that is very cool." He overheard Firepaw said to

Sandpaw.

"I find it more creepy than anything. They made no noise as they left. Didn't sense them at all. Plus this forest is so creepy and bare." She mew.

"You see now why we practice fighting. They are going to use those cool skills against us. Focus and pay attention, Firepaw." Dustpaw hiss.

They quietly padded to the rogue's camp, making sure they wasn't seen or heard. Yellowfang let out a small hoot to signal to Scraps that they are nearby. Nightpaw look down, seeing Whitestorm leading the attack. They was on a small hill, and from their position, they can see everything. Scraps flick an ear before joining in the attack, leaving the kits unprotected. The molly already attack her friend, taking him by surprise. All five kits is scared stiff, letting out mewls as they approach.

"Relax. We are here to rescue you." Yellowfang mew took on a motherly tone which calm them down a lot. She order Boulder, Russetfur and Ratscar to grab a kit. Nightpaw, Littlepaw and Wetpaw is keeping a lookout, watching the fight between rogues and Thunderclan. They was order to stomp their paws if the battle was coming close to where they are. He notice how they don't use their back legs as much as Shadowclan does. Watching Firepaw closely, he saw how he wasn't the only overthinker in a fight. A thump took his attention away from the fighting and he saw they was ready to go.

As he turn to go, he saw Claw sneaking up behind Firepaw while his back is turn to deal with a large molly, his clanmates each in their own fights. His eyes widen as a sudden realization struck him. Beware the claw that hunts the sun. He remember how the sun shone on Firepaw while the sun was setting. He let out a yowl as he run as fast as he could to help Firepaw. Littlepaw saw this and join him without a word, flicking his tail for the others to go. Boulder narrow his eyes in respect before Yellowfang nudge him to move with a kit in her mouth.

Launching himself at Claw, he tumble him over, getting claw on his

forehead for his efforts. Blood begin to drip down his left eye as he jump off of him.

"Shadowclan?! Now I understand. Didn't think Thunderclan would ever lower themselves to getting help from you. Guess we are found out." Claw hiss as he back away from them.

Nightpaw shook his head to clear the blood away as he let out a growl. Firepaw glance behind him as he bit the tail of the molly he was fighting, forcing her to run away. Littlepaw stood by his side, and Firepaw join soon after on his other side. It didn't matter what clan they were from, they are together on this.

"You think you can beat me, the leader of Bloodclan?!" Claw look back and saw a tabby molly with one eye coming towards them. "Fury! Let's kill these apprentices together. Let us show them the power of Bloodclan!"

Claw eyes shone with a hint of madness as he crouch, about to attack. Before he could, Fury grab him by the scruff, biting down hard until he died, shock in his eyes. Nightpaw glance at the others, seeing the same confusion on their faces that is clearly on his own.

"He was always too arrogant for his own good. We will leave for now. By the way, that brown kit is Oak, his son. Keep him for we have no need for weaklings in our ranks. Bloodclan! Retreat!" She let out a yowl, stopping the fighting that was still going on. They ran away towards the Twolegplace.

Whitestorm and the others walk up, all having various injuries on their pelts. Shadowclan patrol join them, putting down the kits. Whitestorm kneel and nuzzle the kits before nodding at Shadowclan.

"Thank you for your help. What should we do for the brown kit? He looks old enough to be an apprentice." He asks as his patrol picks up their kits, leaving Oak alone.

"We should take him. Think of it as payment for our help." Boulder said as Yellowfang pick him up.

Darkstripe was about to say something but Longtail slap his tail across his mouth.

"Guess this is goodbye for now. I also want to apologize for the way we think of you. Next time we will look at all possibilities." Runningwind said as they took their leave.

"Thanks for saving my life. See you at the next gathering." Firepaw purr as he ran to catch up to the others.

Wetpaw watch the disappearing Thunderclan, looking at Nightpaw with a question in his eyes. Nightpaw gave a small nod before telling the others the kit name. As they walk to camp, oakkit as he was being called, seem to be deep in thought as he is carried.

"They abandoned me." Was all he said as they travel back.

"Hey. That is one thing we in Shadowclan don't do. We never abandon our clanmates. Stick with us and you will see. I was a newcomer like you." Nightpaw mew as he walk besides Yellowfang. He heard a small purr coming from him, being glad he can do something to help.

Chapter 18

They walk into camp, saw that Brokenstar is waiting on them in front of clanrock. Nightpaw saw him order Newtspeck to get their guests back. Yellowfang put down Oakkit to tell him how the mission went. The rest of the clan came out of the dens, Nightpaw sat besides Oakkit, being a comforting presence for him. He knew how intimidating the clan can seem at first.

"Is that the leader?" Oakkit asks as he watch the patrol report to him. "He is scary. Look at his tail. Is it broken? I can tell he been in a lot of fights. Look at his scars."

"Yes. That is Brokenstar. That white tom with black paws is the deputy. His name is Blackfoot." Nightpaw can feel Oakkit shivering besides him. "Don't be afraid as I'm sure he just want to introduce you to the clan. Come on." Nightpaw nudge him so he can walk towards them.

Ah. Hello young one. Don't worry as we will take care of you. How old are you?" Brokenstar ask as he blink softly at Oakkit.

"I'm four moons. At least that what my father told me when I ask him. They left me behind." Oakkit murmur as he look at his paws. You not going to throw me away right? Heard my dad talk about you guys."

"No. We don't throw anyone away. Especially kits." Brokenstar eyes narrow as he thought about Bloodclan.

Before he can continue, Newtspeck came back with Ashfoot, Eaglekit and Morningflower. Eaglekit ran up to Oakkit and ask if he is going to be living here. Oakkit flinches at Eaglekit eagerness.

"Eaglekit! Sorry about that Brokenstar. Still teaching him manners. Apologize for interrupting Shadowclan leader." Ashfoot scold as she ran up and pick him up by his scruff.

"Sorry Brokenstar. Mom, put me down. I'm old enough to walk on my own." Eaglekit whine as she carry him to the nursery. Nightpaw purr in amusement as he walk to the medicine den, seeing Runningnose motion for him to join him. He sat next to him, watching Brightflower and Morningflower walking more slowly. He almost forgot about his cut above his eyebrow.

"I see that the mission was successful. Everyone else came back without a scratch, so what happened to you?" He asks as he treat the cut.

"I saved Firepaw. He was getting ambushed from behind so I rush and barreled into the rogue. Got hit but jump off before he can do anything more." He answered as Brokenstar announced a night of feast.

"Lucky for you, it is a shallow cut so it shouldn't scar. Head wounds often bleed more than any other place." Runningnose finish by putting a small dab of cobwebs on the cut. "Done. Just be more careful in the future. Don't want to lose an eye." He went to get something to eat as Runningnose clean up.

"Hey Nightpaw, want to share a mouse?" Gullpaw ask as she held two mice in her mouth, stopping him from the prey pile.

"Sure." He mew as he follow her to the clearing near the apprentice den. He purr as he saw the rest of the apprentices, sitting next to Gullpaw as she gave him a mouse.

"So this mouse brain see Firepaw in trouble and rush in, tackling the rogue. That how he got hurt." Littlepaw was mewing to the others.

"Not like I was alone. Littlepaw came after me. So we all faced down Claw. Then Claw got killed by his own friend. Or was a friend. Fury was her name and she told us to take Oakkit, gather her friends and left." He finish the story.

"So Firepaw had to do with the prophecy? No wonder you rushed to his aid. Beware the claw that hunts the sun." Wetpaw whisper as they ate, looking around to be sure they wasn't overheard. The clan

was talking to each other, not paying them any attention.

Nightpaw open his jaw to answer when Brokenstar jump onto the clanrock. He look up when he noticed both Snow and Oakkit was in front of the rock. Boulder, Swampcloud, Brightflower and Clawface was there as well. Seem he was having a small meeting with them.

"Shadowclan and guests!" He look towards Ashfoot, Eaglekit and Morningflower who was peeking from the nursery. "I know you all been curious of what my decision are towards Snow and Oakkit. Brightflower told me she would look after Oakkit. Snow has expressed interest in joining Shadowclan." Voices rose in protest as they glare at her. "She told me that she will become an apprentice just like her brother. I understand your reluctance so I'm going to give her two moons to prove herself to Shadowclan."

The cats murmur among themselves and quiet down. Nightpaw knew her two moons are going to be tough. They aren't going to forget that she did wanted to run them off their territory like they did to Windclan. But he knew that she she had no other choice but to join them. She can go back to being a rogue but her family is here. She found her long lost brother and his family. Snow is now an aunt to Gingerpaw and Mousepaw.

"Snow. You have been through a rough life with Bloodclan. Do you renounce your connection to Bloodclan, and everything it entails?" Brokenstar stare down at her, with his tail raised for silence.

"I do." Snow sound determined and steady with no hint of hesitation.

"From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Snowpaw. Your mentor will be Swampcloud. I chose Swampcloud especially since he will make sure your loyalty is to our clan." Swampcloud walk forward, eyes full of determination.

Snow have a challenge ahead of her. Nightpaw thought as he remember how unfriendly Swampcloud was to him during his first moons. And he never threatened the clan.

"Swampcloud, make sure that you teach Snowpaw all that you

know. I will be checking in periodically to make sure you remain fair yet tough. Don't disappoint me."

"Yes Brokenstar. I will do my best." Swampcloud turn to her. Hope you are ready to prove yourself. Touch noses." They touch noses and move aside. Brightflower pick up Oakkit when he let out a yawn, carrying him to the nursery.

"Now that is over, Littlepaw and Wetpaw. Come here please." They both glance at each other before glancing at Brownpaw. They quickly lick the blood from their mouth before running to the front.

Nightpaw and the others join as well. He noticed Brownpaw confused expression. That's right, Brownpaw is their brother. Why them and not him?

"Making new warriors is my favorite job as leader. Brownpaw, I talked to Stumpytail and he told me that you wasn't ready. I am sorry. Maybe after-"

"Wait. We don't want to be warriors without our brother!" Littlepaw interrupt Brokenstar.

"We trained together and it isn't right that only two of us become warriors. We can wait until he is ready as well." Wetpaw added.

Brokenstar watch as they went to stand besides him. "This is how a clan should be. Staying together, even holding off their own warrior ceremony. I will accept your decision." Brokenstar smile as he nod and jump down. "Continue celebrating everyone."

A tail touch his shoulder and he turn to see Turtlepaw staring at him, her expression unreadable.

"May we talk?" She whisper in his ear. He nod and they left the camp, fur brushing together. He can tell she need to say something important, which is why he lead her to the moonlight meadow. At least he called it that. The meadow has yellow flowers growing in it. The flowers was something he never saw before. It had spiky leaves and the five petals spread out and resemble a star. A dead log is in the middle, and he guessed it was a tree that fell a long

time ago. Walking in, he saw that she didn't know about this meadow and her face shone with wonder as the moon shone down, lighting up the field of flowers and log.

"I found this place while hunting one night. The flowers look important so I didn't touch them. Moonlight meadow is what I called it. And whenever my anxiety gets bad, I like to come here to calm down. The scent of the flowers help." Nightpaw said softly as he jump on the log. He wait for her to join him.

"This place is beautiful. Moonlight meadow is a great name." Turtlepaw did so, turning to face him, taking a deep breath.

"I want to tell you that..." She stop, her mouth opening and closing like she was trying to force the words out.

"This is new. You..at a loss for words. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. We can just relax here." He purr as he wait for a few heartbeats.

"No, if I don't tell you, I will hate myself for being such a coward. I like you Nightpaw. There, I said it. I like the way you think, I like your kindness and selflessness. Let be honest, you would have saved Firepaw even if he wasn't part of the prophecy." Turtlepaw eyes rounded as she stare at him, and she continue talking.

Now he understand the emotions in her eyes. Is this how others see him? He was only doing what he thought is best. Of course he was going to save Firepaw. Thought of him as a friend, someone who knew what it was like being a kittypet and being introduced to the clans. But is he worth being liked...or even loved? Never thought anyone would ever feel this way about him. He does like her, for no one else made him feel that way. Her laughs, how hard working she is. He don't want to hold her back. His fur grew hot at her compliments.

He put a paw on her mouth to stop her. "Okay I get that you like me. I like you too but was too afraid to say anything. I wanted to tell you but I don't want to be a burden. I...I don't want to get in your way. I see how hard you work to become a warrior and I don't feel like I deserve you. Or anyone really." He glance down at his

paws, kneading the log. He really need to stop that habit.

Her paw place on top of his, stopping his motion, making him glance up at her. "I don't know what you been through and I'm not going to ask unless you want to tell me. We can be partners, no one holding anyone back. We will work together."

She purr as she rub her cheek against his. He purr softly back as they twin their tails together. This feels right, being together. After a few moments, they return to camp.

"Hey Turtlepaw! Nightpaw! Should we expect kits any time soon?" Gullpaw ask as she noticed them first.

"Of course not! Way too young and we got time. Just because we are together, that doesn't mean kits are part of it." Turtlepaw hiss as Nightpaw glare.

"Just pulling your tail. It's about time you got together. We all saw it coming moons away." Gullpaw purr with a teasing look in her eyes.

They spent the rest of the night talking until the sun rose. Nightpaw love his life. Things are looking up. He let out a yawn before heading to his nest. As he slept, he saw his father in his dreams. Remember the prophecy was all he said before he faded away. He open his mouth to tell him the prophecy passed but guess he is wrong.

Author's Final Thoughts

This was a beast to complete. So glad that I got this done and going to take a long break from this series. Am planning on doing the whole Prophecy begins arc with major changes. Hope you enjoy this and yes I will be writing an updated Clan Allegiances after this. Hardest part was keeping it close to canon in this first book before adding the changes. Now the rest will be it's own thing. Might go for more chapters in the next book which will be titled Wind and Shadows. Please let me know what you think and if you want to know anything more.

Updated Clan Allegiances

Shadowclan

Leader: Brokenstar-Long haired dark brown tabby tom with a bent tail and orange eyes

Deputy:Blackfoot-Large white tom with huge jet black paws and amber eyes. Has black rimmed ears(Tallpoppy mate)

Medicine Cat: Runningnose-Small grey and white tom with patchy grizzled and ungroomed fur. Has amber eyes

Warriors(Toms and Mollies without kits)

Yellowfang-Old dark grey molly with a broad flattened face and orange eyes. Has long matted fur

Rowanberry-Cream and brown molly with amber eyes(Clawface's mate)

Scorchwind-Ginger tabby tom with green eyes(Darkflower's mate)

Wolfstep-Long furred, fluffy dark grey tabby tom with a white front paw and tail tip. Has green eyes(Fernshade's mate)

Tangleburr-Grey and brown molly

Russetfur-Sleek dark ginger tabby molly with dark green eyes

Boulder-Big skinny pale grey tom with a ragged left ear, nicked right ear and blue eyes

Apprentice,Wetpaw

Clawface-Heavily built, scrawny battle scarred brown tom with a right nicked ear, white leaf shape spot on chest and yellow eyes(Rowanberry's mate)

Apprentice,Littlepaw

Flintfang-Grey tom with thick fur on paws and amber eyes

Darkflower-Black molly with blue eyes(Scorchwind mate)

Whitethroat-Small black tom with white chest and paws. Has yellow eyes(Wishflame's mate)

Wishflame-Pale ginger tabby molly with yellow eyes(Whitethroat's mate)

Hopeheart-Cream and grey molly with amber eyes

Apprentice,Gingerpaw

Fernshade-Slender tortoiseshell molly with yellow eyes

Apprentice,Gullpaw

Deerfoot-Long legged brown tom

Swampcloud-White tom with dark green eyes

Apprentice,Snowpaw

Newtspeck-Black and ginger tabby molly with yellow eyes

Tallpoppy-Long legged light brown tabby molly with green eyes(Blackfoot's mate)

Applefur-Mottled brown molly with green eyes

Apprentice, Mousepaw

Badgerfang-Fluffy black and white tom with face stripes like a badger.

Apprentice,Nightpaw

Mintshade-Small grey tom with yellow eyes

Marigoldfur-Small tortoiseshell molly with orange eyes

Ratscar-Dark brown tom with a long scar across his back. Has green eyes and patchy tail(Dawncloud's mate)

Dawncloud-Small pale ginger tabby molly with blue eyes(Ratscar's mate)

Cinderfur-Scarred thin grey tom with orange eyes

Stumpytail-Brown tom with darker stripes and a short stumpy tail

Apprentice,Brownpaw

Blossomsky-White molly with blue eyes

Volewhisper-Tiny light brown tom with yellow eyes and a scarred left hind leg

Mossclaw-Big brown and white tom with very pale blue eyes

Apprentice, Turtlepaw

Apprentices(More than six moons old,training to be warriors)

Littlepaw-Very small thin brown tabby tom with dark stripes, light brown tail and bright blue eyes

Brownpaw-Big brown tom with orange eyes

Wetpaw-Grey tabby tom with amber eyes

Gullpaw-Black and white molly with white paws and orange eyes

Turtlepaw-Black and orange tortoiseshell molly with blue eyes

Gingerpaw-Orange and brown tabby molly with green eyes

Mousepaw-Small dark brown molly with blue eyes

Nightpaw-Thin small black tom with white heart shape spot on forehead, white muzzle, white paws, white spots on back, and white tail tip. Has nick in left ear tip and yellow eyes

Snowpaw(Former Rogue)-Sleek, lithe, well-muscled pure white molly with green eyes

Queens(Mollies expecting or nursing kits)

Brightflower-Orange tabby molly with a flattened face. Oldest nursing queen(Adopted Oakkit, small light brown tom with green eyes)

Ashfoot-Broad faced grey molly with blue eyes(Mother to Eaglekit, A grey tom)

Morningflower-Tortoiseshell molly with amber eyes(Close to kitting)

Elders(Former warriors and queens now retired)

Crowtail-Sleek long legged small black tabby molly with green eyes

Ashfur-Thin long bodied grey tom with green eyes

Archeye-Grey tabby tom with black stripes, patchy fur and thick stripe over left eye. Has green eyes

Nightpelt-Small lean and battered black tom with a long tail, short glossy pelt with nick ears and green yellow eyes

Hollyflower-Sleek long legged dark grey and white molly with green eyes

Thunderclan

Leader: Bluestar-Pale blue grey molly tinged with silver around the

muzzle, a long scar on shoulder that parts the fur across them. Has blue eyes

Deputy: Lionheart-Pale golden tabby tom with thick fur like a lion's mane and green eyes(Father to Frostfur's kits)

Apprentice, Greypaw

Medicine Cat: Spottedleaf-Dark tortoiseshell and white molly with distinctive dappled coat and amber eyes

Apprentice,Ravenpaw

Warriors

Whitestorm-Big white tom with tufted ears and yellow eyes(Father to Brindleface kits)

Tigerclaw-Big dark brown tabby tom with unusually long front claws. Right ear is split in a v shape near the top has a scar across his muzzle and pale amber eyes

Apprentice,Firepaw

Darkstripe-Sleek black and grey tabby tom with yellow eyes

Longtail-Pale brown tabby tom with dark black stripes and pale blue eyes(Mousefur mate)

Runningwind-Swift light brown tabby tom with green eyes and a narrow face

Willowpelt-Very pale silver grey molly with unusual blue eyes

Cricketsky-Blue grey molly with amber eyes

Mousefur-Small dusky brown molly with amber eyes(Longtail mate)

Sandstorm-Pale ginger molly with barely visible stripes of darker fur and forest green eyes

Dustpelt-Dark brown tom with amber eyes

Apprentices

Greypaw-Long haired dark grey tom with dark stripe on back. Has yellow eyes

Ravenpaw-Small skinny black tom with a tiny dash of white on chest and white tail tip. Has green eyes

Firepaw-Bright flame colored tom with emerald green eyes

Queens

Frostfur-White molly with dark sky blue eyes and sleek soft fur(Mother to Cinderkit, Smoky dark grey molly with pale blue eyes, Brightkit, White molly with ginger patches and blue eyes, Thornkit, Golden brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes and brackenkit, Long legged golden brown tabby tom with amber eyes)

Brindleface-Pale grey tabby molly with darker flecks and green eyes(Mother to Ashkit, pale grey tom with darker flecks and dark blue eyes, Fernkit, pale grey molly with darker flecks and pale leaf green eyes, Tulipkit, pale grey tom with darker flecks and green eyes, and Elderkit, dark grey tom with yellow eyes)

Goldenflower-Sleek , small pale ginger tabby molly with small nick in one ear and yellow eyes(Mother to Swiftkit, small black and white tom with pale amber eyes and Lynxkit, Ginger with black patches tom with yellow eyes)

Speckletail-Pale golden tabby molly with amber eyes. Oldest nursery queen(Mother to Snowkit,Deaf white tom with pale blue eyes and Mistlekit, Dark tabby molly with amber eyes)

Elders

One-Eye-Pale grey molly with one yellow eye. Oldest cat in Thunderclan. Virtually blind and deaf

Halftail-Dark brown tabby tom with patchy fur and part of his tail missing. Has yellow eyes

Dappletail-Dappled tortoiseshell and white molly with white

patches and amber eyes

Rosetail-Grey tabby molly with bushy pinkish-orange tail

Windclan-Chase off of territory. Missing.

Riverclan

Leader:Crookedstar-Huge light brown tabby tom with green eyes and a twisted jaw.

Deputy:Leopardfur-Sleek fur dappled golden tabby molly with amber eyes. Has unusual dark golden spots on her pelt with a long winding tail

Medicine cat:Mudfur-Lean and lithe, thick furred long hair light brown tom with a pale belly. Has golden eyes

Warriors

Dawnbright-Ginger and white molly

Mallowtail-Tortoiseshell tabby and white molly

Timberfur-Big burly, greying dark brown tom with sleek fur(Ottersplash mate)

Owlfur-Sleek furred, brown and white tom with a white splash muzzle and small head(Softwing's mate)

Softwing-Small lithe snowy white molly with tabby patches(Owlfur's mate)

Cedarpelt-Greying,stout, large mottled brown tabby tom with a short tail(Lakeshine mate)

Piketooth-Skinny, greying,dark brown tabby tom with a narrow face and protruding canine teeth(Shimmerpelt mate)

Beetlenose-Broad shouldered tom with crow black fur

Voleclaw-Grey tom

Petaldust-Tortoiseshell molly

Mudthorn-Brown tom with black ears and amber eyes

Grasswhisker-Brown tabby molly

Frogleap-Muscular grey tom with a striped tail, broad head and amber eyes

Mosspelt-Lithe tortoiseshell and white molly with blue eyes and soft white chest fur(Frogleap mate)

Sedgecreek-Brown tabby molly with a long tail

Ottersplash-Sleek, pale ginger molly with white patches and a torn ear(Timberfur mate)

Lakeshine-Mottled long haired, grey and white molly(Cedarpelt's mate)

Shimmerpelt-Night black molly with a glossy pelt

Vixenleap-Black molly

Emberdawn-Dark ginger molly with green eyes(Willowstep mate)

Lightstep-Small grey tom with yellow eyes

Blackclaw-Lean muscular smoky black tom. Has a torn ear tip and orange eyes(Rainfall's mate)

Heavystep-Big and thickset brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

Shellstream-Long legged thick furred pale grey blue tom with battle scarred ears, one is shredded. Has blue eyes(Is Father to Greenflower's kits)

Shadepelt-Very dark grey molly

Loudbelly-Dark brown tom with blue eyes

Silvernose-Silver tom with yellow eyes

Silverstream-Sleek slender silver and black tabby molly with bright blue eyes

Whiteclaw-Muscular dark brown tom with snowy white paws and amber eyes

Rainfall-Lithe pale blue grey molly with thick sleek fur and a plumy tail. Has ice blue eyes(Blackclaw mate)

Willowstep-Pale grey and white molly with sleek fur. Has bright blue eyes(Emberdawn mate)

Queens

Greenflower-Plump, brown striped molly with a white splash under chin, one white hind paw and green eyes(Mother to hailkit, a brown molly with blue eyes, Finkit, a grey tom with amber eyes and carpkit, grey and brown molly with pale blue eyes)

Elders

Greypool-Thin grey molly with patchy fur and a scarred muzzle

Cats outside clan

Barley-Black and white tom with blue eyes

Charlie-Pure black tom with yellow eyes. Wears a blue collar. Nightpaw's brother.

Changes I made

There a lot of changes I made for this Au. As you can see in the updated allegiances, Ravenpaw isn't run out of Thunderclan. Also Spottedleaf survived. Bet a lot of people was wondering who is Cricketsky. She is Dappletail and Runningwind kit. Her real father is Stormtail but he died before she was born. Runningwind adopted her and is the only father she knows. Redtail is Firepaw spirit guide this time, which makes more sense than in canon. Bluestar was the mentor of Tigerclaw but he often sneaks out to spar with Thistleclaw. As you already know, all of Bluestar kits survive and is in Riverclan. Leopardfoot adopted Tigerclaw after her kits died. Pinestar was more like a mentor than in a relationship with her. The clan saw them spending time and thought they were together. The prophecy for Firepaw is still in play except there no words for it. Spottedleaf just feels a warm fire like glow and told Bluestar about her feeling.

Relationships

Sandstorm will begin to become friends with Firepaw after seeing how hard he is training. Dustpelt is jealous of sandstorm and firepaw friendship. He becomes a rival. Also he spends time helping his brother Ravenpaw collect herbs.

Darkstripe and Longtail are not like canon. Same with Tigerclaw. Darkstripe is like a older brother to Firepaw and helps with training. Though he don't like to admit his feelings towards the former kittypet, Firepaw can sense he cares. Darkstripe still teases him though in a friendly jab instead of open scorn. Longtail begin to respect him ever since that first fight. He also view him like a younger annoying brother who he teases a lot. Tigerclaw gives Firepaw a fair chance despite his hatred of kittypets. After training him for a few days, he can see what Bluestar saw in him. Firepaw is the same cat in canon except he looks up to Tigerclaw due to being his apprentice. Tigerclaw is much smarter in his plans as well.